Masters Thesis

“Politics as usual?”-The Influence of the Internet on Political Values, Attitudes, and Behaviour in South Africa: A Mixed Study Approach

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Contents

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview

1.1 Background and Rationale

The backbone of any democracy is most certainly the freedom of expression and freedom of press. Only when independent media can operate freely within a country, spread accurate political information, provide citizens with a pluralistic account of events and monitor the performance of government, a political system can be defined as democratic. In the traditional sense, media are responsible for providing the ordinary citizen with information about the outcomes of political decisions by their political representatives. Thereby they allow citizens to make informed decisions and thus increase their "political awareness, responsibility and trust in representative democracy" (Ceron, Memoli, 2015:227). Thus, the media are a powerful tool that can shape political attitudes and values by "influencing public perception about the nature and importance of issues and problems" (Heywood, 2013:179). The more information is available, the better voters can monitor politicians. Therefore, much like opposition parties, the media function as a political 'watch-dog' that protects against abuses of power, facilitates political accountability, and uncovers corruption (Camaj, 2013).

Although some argue that the negativity of the media, and the coverage of politics as "horse-race" can lead to lower levels of trust and cynicism (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Robinson, 1976; Heywood, 2013:185), it is generally agreed upon that the media is only beneficial for democracy. Norris (2000) talks about the "virtuous circle" of trust in democratic institutions that is facilitated through media coverage. The more an individual is exposed to political information, the more he or she will be interested in politics, have an increased knowledge about politics, and will become more likely to participate (Dalton, 1996; Norris, 2000). In short, the media – while acknowledging that some pursue a biased agenda that may lead to fabricated information – is a beneficial tool for democracy by increasing internal and external levels of efficacy.

What about online media? Manuel Castells, a Spanish sociologist whose research and academic contributions focus on the formation and rise of the information society, introduced his ideas concerning networks and information in the late 1990s. Preceding his work on the knowledge society – elicited by the change in social structures such as the economy and labour processes – Castells claims that we have now entered the age of the network society. Living in what he calls the "information age", of which the primary characteristic is the "spread of networks

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linking people, institutions and countries", he believes that social structures are bound to change (Webster, 2014:101). Castells asserts that the consequences of such a society are two-fold; on the one hand, divisions will be heightened while on the other, integration in global affairs will increase. He traces the roots of the network society back to the information age in the 1970s, a time marked by the end of the post-war settlement and the "capitalist crisis". During this time, the growth of information and communication technologies (ICTs) laid a new foundation for commercial activity. In short, a time he calls the "information revolution" (Webster, 2014:102-103).

His focus does not lie so much with the content of ICTs, but rather its consequences for society. Castells argues that the very nature of access to these technologies determines whether one will be able to play a full part in the network society. Furthermore, he believes that Internet networks will finally replace mass communication networks such as the television, because it "individuates and allows interaction", an important characteristic that combines the internet and politics. Most importantly, however, Castells contends that the Internet with its "technologically and culturally embedded properties of interactivity and individualisation" will lead to the formation of a virtual community and finally lead to an "interactive society" (Webster, 2014:106).

With the rise of the Internet and its users, scholars have begun to show an interest in the relationship between the web and democracy. Opinions about such a relationship are inconsistent. While some argue that it strengthens citizen demand for democracy (Norris, 2011; Stoycheff & Nisbet, 2014), commitment to democratic governance (Swigger, 2013) and satisfaction with democracy (Bailard, 2012), others highlight the null to negative relationship between the web and democratic regimes, participation, and political awareness (Quintelier & Vissers, 2008; Falk, Gold, Heblich, 2012).

As controversial these findings might be, Boullianne (2009) sheds some light on these inconsistencies. In a meta-analysis of 38 studies on the Internet and its effects on democracy, she concludes that findings show overall beneficial effects for democracy. It should be noted that these effects only hold when the web is "expressly used to gather news and retrieve information" (Boullianne, 2009:201). In other words, when it functions in the sense of traditional media. This seems only logical if we consider that the web can be accessed for several purposes that are non-political. There is no reason to expect that Internet usage as such will have any effect – positive or negative – on democracy. What seems to be the common

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denominator between traditional media and the Internet, is political information. Therefore, the level of measurement, i.e. using the Internet to acquire political news or information, is important when trying to determine relationships.

The initial optimism regarding the sheer number of available sources online has quickly been rejected by scholars, who argue that people are more likely to expose themselves to "politically-like minded sources" (Mutz & Young, 2011: 1025). Thereby, their likelihood of being exposed to different viewpoints that could make citizens more critical and/or tolerant decreases and instead, they find themselves in reinforcing environments that foster identity politics.

However, this selective exposure is not just due to individual choices, but also a result of algorithms that sort and filter information for us, based on our preferences. This is done to avoid information overload and to improve users' experiences online by aggregating information that is not relevant to them. Thus, algorithms such as the ones used on social media, decide what we see on these websites which further contributes to the existence of online echo chambers. Yet, around 60% of social media users are unaware of the filtering out of information (Fardigh, 2010), which further reinforces their belief of not missing any relevant news. In fact, each social media users' experience is quite distinct from any other user (Praiser, 2011).

While some authors believe that people tend to expose themselves to echo chambers online (Conover, Ratkiewicz, Francisco, Goncalves, Menczer & Flammini, 2011; Tarbush and Teytelboym, 2012), others contend that social media are the perfect platforms to facilitate "cross-cutting exposure" to different viewpoints (Bakshy, Messing & Adamic, 2015). These mixed findings may suggest that the decision to expose oneself to opposing views depends solely on the individual and their intention to retrieve meaningful, diverse information.

This begs the question as to why the Internet should be any different in shaping citizens' political attitudes and behaviour than traditional media? Bailard (2012:157) provides a simple answer to this question by arguing that "the potential political influence of the Internet hinges on its capacity to make communication, information retrieval, and information dispersion more efficient". This argument is further strengthened if we consider the "high speed, low cost and broad scope" of information that is available online (Ceron & Memoli, 2015:229) as well as the variety of alternating viewpoints that traditional media do not necessarily broadcast. Therefore, the sheer amount of data on the Internet and its pluralistic nature allow users to diversify their sources and through this, shape their opinions in a way that traditional news might not be able to.

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The the impact of the Internet on politics has mostly been studied in more advanced economies where access is almost universal. However, online behaviour and its relation to politics has been largely unexplored in the South African context. Research has been limited to qualitative analyses of hashtag movements in protest action (see Bosch, 2013; Luescher, 2017; Bosch and Mutsvairo, 2017; Bosch, Wasserman and Chuma, 2018; Gwaze, Hsu, Bosch, Luckett, 2018). Therefore, measurable relationships between Internet penetration and citizen attitudes and behaviour can only be speculated. Amidst rising levels of access by South African households, shifts in their political attitudes and behaviour have been observed by scholars such as Schulz-Herzenberg (2014), Steenekamp (2017), Gouws, and Schulz-Herzenberg (2017), de Jager and Steenekamp (2019), Mattes (2008; 2012), Seekings (2014) and others. Even though these scholars attribute those shifts to poor government performance, it could also be that the Internet and social media have had an impact thus far.

1.2 Problem statement

In South Africa, there is increasing evidence to suggest that the Internet and social media may have far-reaching influences on politics and society. Although research on the topic has been done mainly through qualitative approaches, we can draw some conclusions. Particularly social media such as Facebook and Twitter have aided in the mobilisation of cause-oriented participation among South Africans as Bosch (2012; 2013) and colleagues have shown.

Research by the Pew Research Center indicates that in the world's largest economies, the Millennial generation's (term used to usually describe those individuals reaching adulthood in the early 21st century) access to the Internet is nearing almost 100%. By comparison, fewer than six in ten South African Millennials indicated that they have access to the Internet (Poushter, 2016: 10). However, at the time of publication, strong evidence for a digital divide could be found, where younger people had higher access to the Internet. Of all respondents aged 18-24, 52% indicated that they had access to the web compared to a third of 35+-year-olds. Almost two thirds of respondents with higher levels of education versus a mere quarter of respondents with less education reported having access to the Internet and there were large differences between lower income (22%) and higher income (57%) participants (Poushter, 2016: 11). In South Africa, a difference in terms of access based on age, education, and income is therefore apparent. Malowa (2009) claims that many townships, inhabited by mostly black South Africans, are affected the most by the digital divide.

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Despite these relatively low country-levels of Internet usage, the Pew Research Center found that 73% of those respondents who use the Internet are using social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, LinkedIn, Pinterest, etc.), which constitutes 27% of the entire population (Poushter, 2016: 21). According to BusinessTech (2017)[1], 30% of South Africa's entire population is signed up on Facebook and 6.5% have a Twitter account. This may account for the fast spread of the 2015 and 2016 student protests in South Africa, which will be discussed in more detail below.

Tanja Bosch, a leading researcher in media studies, has published various articles that show the use of social media in protest mobilisation in South Africa. According to her research, many citizens are experiencing a "major shift in communication and lifestyle patterns thanks to the rapidly increasing use of social media" (Bosch and Mutsvairo, 2017: 73). Particularly the use of "hashtag politics" has gained strong momentum in the pursuit of mobilising the masses (Bosch and Mutsvairo, 2017: 76).

In March 2015, students from the University of Cape Town called for the "decolonisation" of the university which included *inter alia* the removal of the statue of British imperialist, Cecil John Rhodes. Under the hashtag movement #RhodesMustFall, a group of students organised themselves on social media. In October later that year, students of the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg responded to a government announcement about an increase in tuition fees with the #FeesMustFall movement which spread throughout South African universities. (Mudavanhu, 2017). These protests sparked off later movements such as #OpenStellenbosch at Stellenbosch Universities which demanded the removal of Afrikaans as a tuition language.

Luescher (2017: 231) argues that through these movements "activism in South Africa has taken on characteristics of [internet-aged] network social movements". The use of Internet-based communication, particularly social media such as WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and the like "signals the advent of a new way of mobilising and organising political power" (Luescher, 2017: 231). The growing access to the Internet and social media (mostly via mobile phones) in South Africa has been utilised by many activists who seek to facilitate change (see Bosch, 2013; Bosch and Mutsvairo, 2017; Bosch, Wasserman and Chuma, 2018; Gwaze, Hsu, Bosch, Luckett, 2018).

[1] https://businesstech.co.za/news/internet/199318/how-many-people-use-facebook-twitter-and-instagram-in-south-africa/

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Alongside increased Internet access in South Africa, there is an observable transformation in the political attitudes, and behaviour of South Africans. This is portrayed through studies that show that support for democracy is in decline while support for authoritarian rule increased since 1994, accompanied by declining levels of confidence in the government and lowering levels of support for political process (Steenekamp, 2017). Additionally, there appears to be a decline in institutional trust, perceived low levels government performance (Gouws, Schulz-Herzenberg, 2017; de Jager & Steenekamp, 2019), and declining levels of turnout (Schulz-Herzenberg, 2014). While these changes are likely to be due to poor government performance, it is possible that they may be facilitated through increasing online access. We might see similarities between global trends that suggest that Internet penetration has an influence on political attitudes and behaviour, and the South African context.

Using the last four waves of the World Values Survey (1995, 2001, 2006, 2013), Steenekamp (2017) looks at the political culture in the country by analysing levels of support for democratic rule and support for authoritarian rule since 1995. Although support for democratic rule remained consistently high between 1995 and 2006 since the country's democratic transition, it dropped significantly in 2013. This decrease in support for democracy was accompanied by an increase in support for authoritarian rule. Steenekamp (2017:67) concludes that there "appears to have been a value shift" in the country where the "gap between support for democratic rule and authoritarian rule has narrowed".

Similarly, de Jager and Steenekamp (2019:159) use the last four waves of the WVS to determine the "relationship between quality of governance, legitimacy and support for democratic regimes". Of 15 performance indicators, 11 declined by more than 10%. The results show that South Africans place a high value on the instrumental aspects of democracy as reflected in their dissatisfaction with government's inability to deliver predominantly economic goods, which in turn leads to declining support for the incumbent government. As such, South Africans still hold strong materialist value priorities (de Jager, Steenekamp, 2019:161).

Gouws and Schulz-Herzenberg (2017) show that trust in authorities in South Africa is on a decline as seen by a decline in both specific and diffuse support for democracy. As a result, there has been an increase in scepticism between the years of 2006 and 2014. The implications thereof give rise to concern as diffuse support is a critical component in the process of reconciliation in newly established democracies. A decline in diffuse support would eventually lead to a decline in support for the political community which may have negative effects on

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democracy and the process of nation building. Gouws and Schulz-Herzenberg (2017:224) fear that the erosion of diffuse support will lead to government resorting to "more authoritarian action or attempts to conceal poor government decision making", which will eventually erode legitimacy, a concept crucial for any successful democracy.

As such, we find that there is a simultaneous decline in perceptions of government performance, institutional confidence, and levels of trust that translates into low levels of diffuse support (Gouws, Schulz-Herzenberg, 2016, 2017), which tends to "render citizens more likely to reject the existing political system and support parties of the extreme Right or Left" (Garcia-Rivero, Kotzé, du Toit, 2002:172). This shows that there exists a legitimacy gap in South Africa, which makes "the country vulnerable to radicalism" (de Jager, Steenekamp, 2019:165).

Electoral participation levels have also declined in South Africa. Schulz-Herzenberg (2014) finds that the number of registered voters and actual vote casts has declined since 1994 in comparison to a growing eligible voting age population. The decline in turnout and registration levels are particularly strong among younger South Africans and reflect similar global trends in relation to declines in political participation among young people (Henn & Weinstein, 2006; Mattes, 2012; Seekings, 2014; Wattenberg, 2015; Mattes & Richmond, 2015).

Most scholars attribute these changes in political attitudes and behaviour as reflected in declining levels of trust, support, performance evaluation, and turnout levels to government's inability to deliver economic goods, rising levels of corruption and mismanagement. While this cannot be disputed, another aspect that may affect these changes, which is the influence of the Internet and information and communication technologies (ICTs), remains largely unexplored in the South African context. The evidence presented by the global literature that supports the notion that the Internet affects political outcomes, speaks for an evaluation of the role of the Internet in South African politics.

1.3 Literature review

1.3.1 Effects of Internet use on political attitudes

The global literature suggests that increasing use of ICTs has resulted in increasing influences on political attitudes and behaviour. These studies predominantly focus on advanced economies and to date, there is little to no academic research that focuses on the influence of

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the Internet on attitudes and behaviour in South Africa. Below, some primary findings are discussed. These lay the foundation upon which research questions and hypotheses are formed.

Norris (2001) argues that cyberspace is dominated by people holding postmaterialist value preferences, where users are more concerned with self-actualisation and issues concerning quality of life, self-expression, individual freedom, cosmopolitanism, and participatory democracy. Thereby, postmaterialist values are more likely to spread faster among Internet users than non-users. In relation to previously expressed arguments that the Internet may facilitate new forms of social capital (Martin, 2008:5) through interactivity and exchange, the content creator and the content consumer "merge" in the absence of hierarchies (Yildiz, 2002). It becomes clear that emancipative values indeed seem to be popular online.

Johnson and Kaye (2003:27) suggest that the use of the Internet serves as a "strong predictor of positive political attitudes". Through the exposure to political information online, citizen interest and in politics is heightened and as a result they develop attitudes that are conducive to strengthening political efficacy and citizens' willingness to engage in politics. Especially satirical news may heighten citizen interest in politics as they "may intersect with, or even affect" viewers' perceptions of politicians as well as their attitudes and beliefs about political systems. The combination of comedy and serious political topics seems to appeal to many viewers and as a result may lead to increased political knowledge, efficacy as well as increased criticism toward politicians.

Stoycheff and Nisbet (2014) believe that increased Internet exposure may lead to citizens becoming more critical and aware of politicians in their respective country. Through the process of "window-opening" and "mirror-holding", people are exposed to different regime types and can compare these to their own. As a result, they begin to see democracy as a favourable political system and thus demand more democracy in their own country, while also perceiving a lower supply. Therefore, Nisbet and Stoycheff (2014) believe that Internet access leads to the rejection of authoritarian rule.

1.3.2 Effects of Internet use on political behaviour

In light of a decline in overall political participation, especially among younger generations in western democracies, some arguments have been made that the web itself might be responsible. Bakker and de Vreese (2011:453) disagree and believe that many of such assumptions are "biased by a disproportional focus on institutional and limited measures of participatory behaviour". Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) have shown that participation has a number

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of dimensions and that different kinds of participation depend on time and resources available to citizens. The Internet, however, lowers opportunity costs of participation to a variety of users, most importantly the youth. Bakker and de Vreese (2011:465) also find that various types of Internet use are "positively linked to measures of political participation".

Below, four theses will be briefly discussed that seek to explain the effects of Internet usage on political participation. The most positive view is held by "cyber-optimists", who emphasise the possibilities of online activities for the "involvement of ordinary citizens in (…) democracy" (Norris, Curtice 2006:2). This view often also called the "mobilisation thesis" suggests that online activities may serve as a substitute mechanism for the facilitation of alternative channels of civic engagement. This could be achieved through political chat-rooms, remote electronic voting in elections, referenda, and the mobilisation of virtual communities which could have the potential to "revitalise levels of mass participation" (Norris, Curtice, 2006:2).

Norris and Curtice (2006:12), using the British Social Attitudes Survey of 2003, find that people who spend more time online are also more likely to vote and to engage in offline forms of political participation. Additionally, they find evidence for the existence of a "digital divide" among Internet users where younger people are more active, and that usage is "skewed toward the well-educated and more affluent social sectors".

Other theories proposed by "cyber-pessimists" challenge this view by arguing that the Internet will eventually "reinforce existing inequalities of power and wealth, generating deeper divisions between the information rich and poor" (Norris, Curtice, 2006:3). This "reinforcement thesis" maintains that the Internet may further contribute to a participation gap between "engaged and disengaged citizens" (Hoffman, Lutz, Müller, 2017:1). At worst, the Internet could create a "digital divide" by increasing the power of the elites while disenfranchising the poor who have little access to it (Johnson & Kaye, 2003:10).

The "normalisation thesis", also representing a rather pessimistic view, proposes that the appearance of the knowledge society has had little impact on changing the participation gap between engaged and disengaged citizens. It further states that technology has done little in changing the political *status quo*, and that radical change is unlikely to happen as the Internet will eventually reflect a "politics as usual" scenario, where participation will be skewed towards more educated and wealthier users (Norris, Curtice, 2006; Hoffman, 2017).

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Finally, the "displacement hypothesis" suggests that "time spent online could actually displace time formerly devoted to social and political purposes" (Hoffman, 2017:1). This view holds that the more an individual spends time on the Internet or operating technological devices, the less likely he or she is to devote remaining leisure time to pursue civic activities. As a result, Internet use would contribute to the weakening, instead of the strengthening of citizen's civic and political engagement.

Of all theses, the mobilisation thesis stands out in the literature and has gained the most support of all four theses. Although opinions differ largely in terms of measurement and what merits the label "online political participation", it becomes clear that despite a lack of consensus, the Internet does exert a considerable influence on its users.

1.4 Research Questions and Hypotheses

1.4.1 Research Question 1

RQ1: Which demographic groups predominantly use the Internet and social media to source political news?

The reinforcement hypothesis suggests that certain groups of people, especially younger, more educated individuals dominate the web and are therefore more likely to be exposed to different ideas and beliefs. This in turn, could have implications for members of different groups of society. In short, it is important to determine who Internet users are and how Internet use may affect their attitudes, values, and behaviour.

Previous research about the Internet has revealed a gap where users of a higher socioeconomic background, and higher levels of education are most active, commonly referred to as the *reinforcement thesis*. Furthermore, younger generations appear to be more present on social media platforms and the Internet in general, due to their early introduction to technology and their ability to adapt and utilise it (Steinberg, 2015).

Thus, in relation to **RQ_1,** the following hypothesis arises:

Hypothesis 1: regular Internet users tend to be younger, and more educated.

Yet, these findings were made in advanced economies, where smaller income and equality gaps exist. However, South Africa remains one of the most unequal societies in the world with a

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Gini coefficient of 0.65 measured in 2015, with the black population predominantly suffering from poverty and low standards of living (StatsSA, 2016[2]). While recent years have seen an impressive growth of South Africa's black middle class, which has increased from 1.6 to 6 million within the last five years and is now larger than the white middle class (Korhonen, 2018[3]), it can nevertheless be expected that access is determined by race as Bosch (2018) argues.

Hypothesis 2: There is a difference in terms of access to Internet and social media based on race.

According to research released by Statista (2017[4]), men (51%) in South Africa have a slightly higher access to ICTs than women (49%) with a mere 2% difference in access and/or usage. This, combined with decreasing costs as well as increasing ease of accessing the Internet, leads to the second hypothesis of this study:

Hypothesis 3: Gender does not determine access to or frequency of Internet and social usage.

Studies have shown that certain segments of the population have uneven access to the Internet, with rural areas being less likely to have an Internet connectivity, neither through a land line nor through a cellular phone (Sylvester, McGlynn, 2010). This is due to the fact that broadband providers are not as quick to enter rural markets, because of lower profitability as a result of limited customers, as well as the difficulty of building technological infrastructure on uneven terrain. Therefore, the third hypothesis in line with **RQ_1** states:

Hypothesis 4: Internet and social media users are more likely to live in urban, rather than rural areas.

[2] http://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=9922
[3] https://africacheck.org/factsheets/factsheet-measuring-south-africas-black-middle-class/
[4] https://www.statista.com/statistics/462958/internet-users-south-africa/

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1.4.2 Research Question 2

RQ2: Is there a measurable difference between Internet and social media users versus non-users in terms of their political attitudes and behaviour?

The literature review in this study outlines the comparative, global research on the observable shifts in political attitudes and values and a marked difference in the political behaviour of Internet users and non-users. Building on the premise of such differences, the second research question looks at where attitudes and behaviour differ in terms of age and race of respondent. Are Internet users more interested in politics and more critical of government and officials? Do they exert more emancipative values than those individuals who use the Internet less frequently? Are they more politically engaged and more likely to participate? How do they affect different parts of society?

A number of scholars (de Vreese, 2007; Moeller, et al. 2014; Velasquez & La Rose, 2015) believe that the Internet plays an increasingly important role in informing citizens in terms of politics and "cultivating a sense of political efficacy". People who spend more time browsing the web are more likely to be exposed to political information, whether they intentionally search for it or not, than people who spend less time online. This results in a heightened sense of political interest and efficacy, reflected in more political discussions with family and peers. In relation to **RQ_2,** the following hypotheses stand;

> **Hypothesis 5:** frequent Internet and social media users are more likely to discuss and be interested in politics than non-users.

The content that is shared on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube, varies significantly. Users may choose to post/tweet their own opinions in the form of visual or written content and can share articles containing news, lifestyle, politics, or recreation. Additionally, users can disclose their personal information on such websites, for example, their religious orientations, political affiliations, hobbies, or even telephone numbers, emails and residence. Swigger (2012:590) argues that the rise of Web 2.0 and specifically social networking sites have a significant impact on the values that individuals hold. He argues that individuals, who are actively sharing information have begun to "value the right of free expression more and the right of privacy less". His research provides evidence that the Internet, while becoming a fundamental aspect of most people's everyday lives, has begun to shape and

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change the way people perceive a number of things, including values and beliefs. Accordingly, the following hypothesis arises:

> **Hypothesis 6:** regular Internet users are more likely to express a preference for emancipative values (less deference to authority posed by government) than non-users.

Nisbet and Stoycheff (2014) conducted a study examining the relationship between Internet access and perceived supply and demand for democracy. Results confirmed that the more access individuals had to the Internet, the more likely they were to perceive a low supply of democracy in their country and consequently display higher demands. Through the process of "window-opening", Internet users are exposed to the way governments function in other countries, and as a result, form ideas about roles and responsibilities of citizens and state and then compare these to conditions in their own countries through the process of "mirror-holding" (Bailard, 2012a, 2012b). Through these processes, individuals become more likely to prefer democracy over any other kind of government. Consequently, the following hypotheses are formed:

> **Hypothesis 7:** Internet and social media users are more likely to be critical and distrustful of government and political actors than non-users.

> **Hypothesis 8:** Internet users are more likely to express a preference for democracy over any other form of government.

The significance of Web 2.0 platforms is that users have the opportunity to participate in the flow and exchange of information, instead of a mere passive absorption of information. The interactive nature of such discussions does not only allow for almost immediate feedback, but participation in such discussions is unrestrained by time, and users' geographical location. Furthermore, they represent an opportunity to obtain information at a much lower cost in terms of time and resources than conventional sources of information. Therefore, Web 2.0 may have significant impacts on the mobilisation of civil society. In the South African context, this could be observed especially among tertiary education students who instigated movements such as 'Fees Must Fall', 'Rhodes Must Fall', or 'Open Stellenbosch', the mobilisation of which primarily took place on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Thus, the following research question arises:

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Hypothesis 9: the more time someone spends online, more likely they are to be engaged in offline political participation[5], thus providing evidence for the mobilisation thesis.

1.5 Methodology and Operationalisation

This research study follows a mixed methods approach. Debates exist between supporters of qualitative and quantitative research approaches, and each has its own strengths and limitations. The main advantage of a mixed methods approach is the fact that inferences can be made based on quantitative outcomes and can further be studied in detail through qualitative research. While both approaches differ significantly, they can at times complement each other and yield benefits to the outcome of research. Ragin (1994a:92) explains that "most quantitative data techniques (…) condense data in order to see the bigger picture. Qualitative methods, by contrast, are best understood as data enhancers. When data are enhanced, it is possible to see key aspects more clearly".

Nie and Erbring (2000) suggest that time individuals spend online is less important than what they are doing online, i.e. which websites they visit and how they engage with those websites. The quantitative research of this study will only provide information on whether people who do use the Internet for political news, are in some way influenced by it. However, this approach does not explain in what way they engage with the news they read online and whether they receive them from reputable sources. This gap is aimed to be filled by the qualitative aspect of this research in that it seeks to determine *how* students engage with content online, which may in turn have a potential impact on their political values, attitudes and behaviour.

1.5.1 Part I: Quantitative analysis

Using quantitative data analysis, inferences will be made about possible associations and relationships between Internet use and political attitudes, values, and participation. The data will be derived from the Afrobarometer Round 6 Questionnaire of 2015. Therefore, a cross-sectional, rather than a longitudinal approach will be taken in terms of the quantitative research.

Dependent variables

The dependent variables in this study are numerous political attitudes, values, and participation. Using the Afrobarometer Round 6 data, question items pertaining to each variable will be

[5] Such as voting, attending community meetings or raising an issue, and being active in campaigns

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grouped together under attitudes, values, and behaviour. (See Appendix B for a full outline of question items)

1. **Political values** are measured through a battery of questions where respondents were asked with which statement they agree the most. Specifically, emancipative value preferences will be tested. Respondents who are more likely to believe that government should interfere when it comes to press freedom and freedom to join any organisation, and oppose gender equality in terms of leadership are believed to have lower emancipative value sets. Furthermore, respondents are asked questions pertaining to their valuing of democracy as grounded in Nisbet's and Stoycheff's (2014) findings.
2. **Political attitudes** are measured by looking at questions that measure views of democratic processes in South Africa, citizens' views and evaluations of government and the country, as well as views of political institutions.
3. **Political behaviour** is measured by looking at respondents' partisanship, turnout, their campaign and communal activity, as well as protest action.

Demographic variables

Demographic variables will be employed to determine any sociological differences in usage based on age, gender, race, location, and education. The demographic variables used in this research study are age, gender, race, education and location of respondent. The categories for age and education of respondent will be collapsed into less categories in order to make the analysis clearer.

Independent and control variable

Contrary to most research that looks at the effect of many independent variables on one dependent variable, this research will focus on three independent variables (internet and social media use for political news, and a scale consisting of both, social media and general internet use for acquiring political news) and how they affect a large number of dependent variables (political values, attitudes, and behaviour). This study will distinguish between Internet and social media *users* and *non-users* (see chapter 3 for a detailed description for the criteria of determining usage). The distribution of Internet users (48.8%) and non-users and social media users (47.8%) and non-users (52.3%) represents a more or less equal distribution of respondents, which is important for statistical tests.

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1.5.2 Part II: Qualitative analysis

Once associations based on quantitative analysis have been determined, the second part of the research aims to focus on qualitative data collection through focus group discussions with students at Stellenbosch University. Following **H1**'s assumption that Internet users tend to be younger and more educated, this seems to be an appropriate focus group that could offer valuable insight into the nature of engagement with the Internet among young people. It might also offer useful insight into the political behaviour of this cohort, which appears to be less engaged in politics than its older counterparts (Tracey, 2016; Resnick & Casale; Malila, 2016, Schoemann & Puttergill, 2007; Mattes 2012; Mattes & Richmond, 2015; Seekings, 2014).

In order to recruit participants, ethical clearance was sought from Stellenbosch University first, followed by a request at the University to allow the researcher to conduct focus group discussions with students from the department of political science. This serves to determine how students engage with the Internet and social media.

The information obtained during the discussion was handled with confidentiality and participants were guaranteed anonymity. Participants were asked for permission to video record the group discussion for research purposes and had to sign a consent form, informing them of the aim of the research and possible risks. Any data that was be collected during the interviews that could disclose participants' identity was stored on a password-secured personal computer which only the researcher had access to. The venue for discussions was an open, friendly, and neutral environment that enables members of discussions to feel comfortable and safe.

The focus group serves to enrich the outcome of this study through more in-depth discussion of Internet and social media use. It is aimed at gaining a better understanding of the way in which university students engage with content online and how this affects their attitudes, values, and behaviour.

1.6 Significance of the Study

If Hypothesis 1 which assumes that regular Internet users tend to be younger, and more educated, holds true, then this could have major implications for future democratic processes in South Africa. Younger generations will possibly have greater access to a vast array of information that could potentially influence their values and attitudes towards democracy in the country, as well as their levels of mobilisation and participation. Given the large youth bulk

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in the country with a median age of 26 (Statistics South Africa, 2016[6]), we need to pay closer attention to the ways in which this cohort shapes its attitudes and values and how their political behaviour may develop. If young people are more active online, this may imply that the Internet emerges as a new agent of socialisation. Are younger South Africans who have greater access to the web subject to different kinds of socialisation, which have not yet been fully studied?

Depending on the content that is viewed online, more educated Internet users can utilise the information to form their own opinions and make informed decisions by comparing different sources that are widely available. Provided that users do engage in a critical assessment of various sources, this may imply that citizens will be able to make more informed decisions. However, if less educated people also have lower access to the Internet, their levels of access to information may put them in an even more disadvantaged position. As such, a gap in terms of availability of information in South Africa may ensue which will also be prevalent among rural versus urban areas where urban dwellers will have higher access to the Internet than rural dwellers (Hypothesis 4). Furthermore, if the web is dominated by more educated people, we may see an increased inequality gap that transcends to the Internet. Less educated people may thus have less access to information and may be left out in the formation of Castells' information society. This will confirm his prediction that on the one hand, divisions will be heightened, and on the other, integration in global affairs will be increased, (Webster, 2014:102-103).

Hypothesis 2 states that there is a difference in terms of Internet access based on race. If this hypothesis finds support, then we may see increased race cleavages in South Africa, based on technological advancement. Depending on whether people from different race groups have differing levels of access, then Castells' thesis of increased divisions will further run along racial lines in South Africa, "generating deeper divisions between the information rich and poor". This implies that some groups in South Africa may be left behind in the process of modernisation and globalisation and that "existing inequalities of power and wealth" will be reinforced (Norris, 2006:3).

Hypothesis 3 predicts that gender does not determine access to or frequency of Internet and social media usage. Should this hypothesis find support, then we may finally see a closing gap in terms of gender inequality in South Africa. Women and men might have equal access to technology which might further reflect on more equal opportunities in other areas of life.

[6] http://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=9922

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Following Castell's (1998) line of thinking on the appearance of an "information society", Webster (2014) introduces the concept of a "network society" that has emerged through the fusion of capitalism and the "information revolution"[7]. Webster (2014) explains that the formation of the network society bears certain cultural consequences, some of which social scientists have yet to grasp. However, the implications of the network society for politics are clear; in order to be an active participant in politics, one must have access to the network. As such, the network society and politics have embarked on a new relationship, which is increasingly moving online. Hypothesis 5 states that Internet users are more likely to discuss and be interested in politics than non-users, implying that levels of usage determine levels of interest and/or efficacy. If Internet usage turns out to be an indicator of political interest, then this may have positive implications for levels of turnout during elections, and political engagement, ultimately leading to more engaged citizens. This would also confirm Hypothesis 9 which states that Internet users are more likely to be engaged in offline political participation. If Webster's (2014) argument holds true for South Africa, then those who spend more time online are also more likely to play a bigger part in politics. As such, the rise of the web may positively affect levels of consolidation and the quality of democracy in South Africa, which is largely driven by a more informed citizenry that shows an active interest in politics.

In relation to H6, which states that Internet users are more likely to express a preference for emancipative values (less deference to authority posed by the government, freedom of press, and equality in female leadership) than non-users, is supported then this may mark a value shift in South Africa towards more post-materialist value preferences. Mattes (2007) and Steenekamp (2017) contend that South Africans still value democracy instrumentally, rather than intrinsically which is reflected in their higher rankings of economic compared to democratic goods. Van Deth and Scarbough (1995:29) argue, based on various definitions on values that there "appears (…) to be a broad consensus that values are significant in their bearing to action". In this vein, the origin of a change in attitudes about government and politics can be found in the notion of a change of values. Thus, values impact attitudes, which function as the "building blocks of political activity" and may potentially serve as a predictor of behaviour (Manheim, 1982:8). Therefore, a shift from more materialist to emancipative/ post-materialist values may indicate a change in political behaviour in the country.

[7] The information revolution refers to the rapid development and evolution of ICTs in the second half of the 20th century (Melinkov & Semenyuk, 2013:10).

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Welzel (2006:871) argues that "democratization is essentially an emancipative process, for it manifests human freedom by empowering people with civil and political rights". Such an emancipative process, he argues, leads to mass attitudes of "liberty aspirations" which are more powerful in facilitating progress toward democratization than any other indicators such as GDP or social capital. If going online more often translates into greater support for emancipative values, then this could mark an important step toward reconciliation in South Africa. Gouws and Schulz-Herzenberg (2017) show that levels of diffuse support are declining in South Africa, which is worrisome as it could potentially lead to a regime that loses legitimacy and accountability. However, the spread of emancipative values through the Internet could mean a renewed sense of diffuse support for democracy among those who go online more frequently. This would be a heartening finding which could renew hopes for more successful reconciliation.

If Hypothesis 6 and 7 hold true, then Nisbet's and Stoycheff's (2014) study finds support. Through the process of "window-opening" and "mirror-holding" that is enabled through online activity, users can compare their own political system and processes to those elsewhere and thereby increasingly become more distrustful and critical of government performance. At the same time, it may enforce the view of democracy being 'the only game in town' and thereby strengthening preferences for democracy over any other form of government. As a result, we may see a gradual decline in the recent rise in support for authoritarian rule as demonstrated by Steenekamp (2017) and de Jager and Steenekamp (2019) and rising levels of diffuse support for democracy.

The qualitative part of this study which seeks to gain insight into young people's online activity may make a major contribution in the study of (online) media and citizenship in South Africa. It is particularly important to explore the impact of the Internet on younger South African generations given that their political participation at elections has been declining, and their political behaviour now strongly resembles that of other younger generations in advanced democracies (Henn & Weinstein, 2006; Dalton, 2009; Mattes, 2012; Seekings, 2014; Wattenberg, 2015; Mattes & Richmond, 2015). This behaviour does not conform to conventional forms of participation but has been shaped in a way that is more pro-active. Online campaigns have seen a rise in support among young people who wish to influence immediate change in politics, rather than hoping to exert change by voting for representatives that might or might not represent their interests. Due to forces exerted through generational replacement, it is crucial to determine the driving forces behind changes in value preferences and attitudes

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that might influence voting decisions and patterns of political behaviour. Furthermore, given the successful utilisation of social media during the student hashtag movements, it is likely that South Africa's younger cohorts will make use of such platforms in the future.

If we are to study and understand the political behaviour of citizens, we need to consider all possible influences that may affect their political attitudes and values. The Internet and social media are increasingly becoming intertwined in our everyday lives and are thus an integral part in the way we shape opinions and ideas. Therefore, it is essential that we begin to regard it as a significant and important influential political component. This study intendes to mark the beginning of filling the gap that exists in the literature regarding Internet use and South African politics.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter provides an overview of the research study through an introduction and background of what constitutes today's network society and the role of the Internet and ICTs in politics. Furthermore, it provides a problem statement which is that the political attitudes, values and political behaviour of South Africans are changing and that given the rise of heightened Internet access, online influences might be an explanatory factor. This chapter also outlines the research questions and related hypotheses that guide this research study and briefly touches on the methodologies that used in order to answer these questions. It concludes by explaining the significance of this study, which is that should there be significant relationships between Internet and social media use and political attitudes, values and behaviour, we need to consider ICTs as an important political component in South Africa's democracy that needs to be studied in more depth in order to understand South African political behaviour.

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Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The interconnectivity enabled by the web and the growing relevance it has in our lives has led to researchers asking questions about the influence of the Internet on socialisation processes and attitudes, values, and behaviour relating to politics. Information, ideas and beliefs spread rapidly from one country to the next within a matter of seconds. As such they are readily available to us at our own convenience as never before in the years preceding the Internet.

This literature review examines research that explores the relationship between the web and politics. The first section of this chapter provides an overview of why the Internet is relevant in the study of political behaviour. Following this, we look at how the web has infiltrated politics, how it has gained increasing relevance for politicians and how they use online platforms to their advantage in the pursuit of gaining support and connecting with citizens. The third section of this literature review explains how the web may possibly influence value and attitude formations. The fourth section seeks to provide the reader with an overview of the four dominating theses that relate to the Internet and political behaviour, those being the mobilisation, reinforcement, normalisation, and displacement theses. Each thesis is examined separately, and different case studies are provided to demonstrate differing findings in relation to each point of view. Thereafter, an explanation of the dynamic of the Internet and its users sheds some light on the causal relationship between the two. Finally, the review will assess the literature which seeks to explain the interconnectedness of each standpoint relating to political attitudes, values, and behaviour.

2.2 The Internet and Politics

Today, politics without social media seems almost unimaginable – the majority of politicians are using the medium to their advantage. Using Twitter accounts, candidates are able to update their supporters (and opponents) on their latest decisions and policy stances. The 2008 United States presidential bid serves as an excellent example to demonstrate just how effective the Internet and new media were in securing Barack Obama the presidency. The Democratic National Committee (DNC) embarked on an enormous online advertising campaign that was specifically targeting younger voters. In a DNC-organised advert broadcast on YouTube, Obama could be seen sending out his message to his followers,

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> "Today, you have a chance once again to defy the conventional wisdom that we can't overcome the cynicism of our politics. But we can overcome the special interests and the big money. You can prove one more time that change comes from the bottom up. Together, we can keep moving this country forward" (Fifield, 2010).[8]

With an advertising campaign of US $2.5m, the DNC placed videos on popular websites among young people, such as Facebook, MTV, Comedy Central, and YouTube, in order to mobilise voters. As could be seen by the outcome of the election, Obama was successful in exploiting the potential of the Internet which ultimately secured him the presidency. The USA does not serve as the only example demonstrating the beneficial effects of the Internet for political campaigns. During the 2011 Russian presidential election, blogs for example, were a popular means of raising support (Carty, 2017) while YouTube served as another popular source of mobilisation during the 2007 Australian election (Gibson & McAllister, 2011).

In Sweden for example, an entire new party – the Pirate Party – was formed online and quickly gained political momentum and even gained a seat in the European Parliament in 2009 (Li, 2009:307). Even the United Nations has acknowledged the need to include individual experts online as well as individual users (Sha'ban, 2005:238). This goes to show that the Internet has gradually eroded the dominance of certain powerful groups, and channels political influence to individual citizens.

Bertola (2010) even claims that the Internet has not only equalled the playing field of candidates as Bode and Dalrymple (2016) argue, but that it may redistribute power as a whole. She explains that throughout the twentieth century, power has shifted from single large entities such as governments to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that have "replaced traditional, hierarchical power relationships with horizontal and distributed interactions". This process, which has particularly been pushed by the Internet, has now placed power in the hands of individuals, not in the sense of traditional power but in terms of an "avalanche effect" that can be created by a single person "using collaborative internet platforms to promote political stances" and thereby affect an entire political system (Bertola, 2010:327).

This avalanche effect could be seen through Trump's election which was shortly followed by the Cambridge Analytica scandal. In early 2018, Cambridge Analytica allegedly illegally gathered and sold data from over 87 million Facebook users, using a quiz which collected information from users' friends online. The data was employed for now US President Trump's 2016 election campaign by analysing voters' preferences which in turn would predict their

[8] http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/A24115434./AONE?u=27uos&sid=AONE&xid=75c4aa1b

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voting behaviour. Cambridge Analytica, which has now filed insolvency is currently under investigation by the FBI (Reuters, 2018).[9]

Moreover, a recent study by Gunther, Beck, and Nisbet (2018) suggests that the spread of fake news online may have caused Trump to win the presidency. The study suggests that about 4% of Obama's 2012 supporters may have been dissuaded from voting for Clinton in 2016 by belief in fake news stories (Gunther, Beck, Nisbet, 2019:2). Using a YouGov survey, the authors inserted three popular fake news stories into the questionnaire, which about a quarter of Obama voters believed to be true. Of those who believed at least one of the fake stories, 45% voted for Clinton compared to 89% of Clinton supporters who did not believe in any of them. Although no causation between loss of support and fake news could be found in the study, the study's data strongly suggests that fake news did have an impact on the outcome of the election.

Citizens are becoming aware of the role of social media in political campaigns. The Pew Internet and American Life Project survey of 2011 revealed that during the 2010 campaign in the US, 22% of adult Internet users reported using Twitter and other social media websites for political purposes. As Larsson and Moe (2011:729) put it, "in purely quantitative terms, Twitter contributes to a broadening of public debate: it constitutes a novel arena for mediated public communication" testified by the sheer number of tweets.

This argument is supported by the recent shutdown of Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter in Zimbabwe in January 2019, amid violent protests in the country due to a rise in the price of fuel. The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum accused the Zimbabwean authorities of having cut off the Internet in the country to "mask the massive human rights violations" (BBC, 2019[10]). Other examples of an Internet shutdown in 2019 in Africa include the Democratic Republic of Congo, due to a disputed presidential election, Gabon in response to an attempted coup, and Sudan, which blocked social media "amid growing calls for its long-time president to step down" (News24, 2019[11]).

The use of social media has gained increasing popularity among young adults and in many instances is preferred as a source of political information (Rainie, 2012). Arguments have been raised that social media such as Facebook and Twitter do not necessarily represent a source of news since the focal point of such websites is personal interaction and the likelihood of

[9] http://ewn.co.za/2018/05/03/cambridge-analytica-and-british-parent-shut-down-after-facebook-scandal
[10] https://www.bbc.com/news/amp/world-africa-46917259
[11] https://www.news24.com/Africa/News/explainer-109-a-busy-year-for-african-internet-shutdowns-20190121

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encountering news is slim. However, research (Rainie, 2012; Smith & Duggan, 2012a, 2012b) has shown that most young people prefer obtaining political news as well as expressing their political views and opinions on such platforms, thereby creating user-generated political content. Therefore, by virtue of online friends and their expressions on the Internet, the likelihood of encountering political content online grows significantly, even if one is not interested in politics nor deliberatively searches for information (Yamamoto, Kushin & Francis, 2015).

Having established that the Internet has gained increasing importance as a political tool for political parties, candidates and citizens, the question remains how the Internet is used and influences citizens. To understand how the Internet will affect politics in the future, we need to pay closer attention to how it has already facilitated changes in society and politics.

2.3 The Internet and Political Values and Attitudes

Values are fundamental in guiding one's decisions in life as they "presumably shape attitudes and behaviour" (Dalton, 2014:87). They are an indication of what is important to an individual and thus function as a "reference standard for making decisions". However, values in a society are not fixed and contemporary societies have recently displayed shifts in their value priorities, which has led to a "new style of citizen politics" (Dalton, 2014:87; Inglehart & Abrahamson, 1994). In particular, "emancipative values" as Inglehart and Welzel (2009:129) describe them, have recently gained rising popularity globally. As a result of rising levels of education, exposure to political information, and the rise of technology, these values have increasingly replaced "hierarchical relationships and deference to authority" (Dalton, 2014:87) and stress "equality, tolerance, autonomy, and expression", as well as quality of life (Welzel, Inglehart, 2009:129).

Attitudes, on the other hand, are the "building blocks" of political activity (Manheim, 1989:8). They have the potential to predict or serve as an "indicator of behaviour" since they function as a "predisposition to respond to a particular stimulus in a particular manner" (Manheim, 1989:8). When receiving a particular message or being exposed to certain stimuli, attitudes serve as a tool to make sense of information in such a powerful way that the very nature of the message itself may change, due to the fact that the context within which it is received, is highly individualised. Thus, the study of political attitudes is an important tool for social scientists as

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it serves to predict political behaviour. As such, attitudes flow from values and can be seen as a prelude to political behaviour and will be discussed first.

With the rise of Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 platforms, researchers have begun to question whether the rapid spread of information facilitated through such websites, may have a significant influence on the way in which individuals form or in fact change their values and attitudes. As discussed above, the exchange of opinions, feelings, ideas, and attitudes has been made significantly easier through ICTs and users may choose to download or upload these at their own convenience without restrictions posed by time or space. To quote Bode and Dalrymple (2016:315) once more, "users are likely to influence and be influenced by their respective networks", the functions of which are similar to those of agents of socialisation.

Anduiza, Cantijoch and Gallego (2009) believe that although changes in attitudes and values among Internet users might not be directly linked to politics, they can affect citizens' perception of it. Attitudinal changes, so Anduiza, *et al.* (2009: 867) contend, are the result of an "interiorization of the new skills or relational forms that are characteristic of the Internet". Through interactions that span across location, ethnicity, religion, gender, or other sociodemographic differences, users interiorize certain interactive practices (these are not necessarily limited to political purposes but can include, but are not limited to, information searching, leisure, contacts, or general exchange) which then foster attitudinal changes that have an effect on political attitudes and activities (Anduiza, *et al.*, 2009: 868). Thereby by virtue of interacting with others online, users might undergo attitudinal changes that affect political attitudes and behaviour.

In 2014 Stoycheff and Nisbet explored the way in which Internet use impacted citizens' perceptions of demand and supply of democracy. Using data from the 2007 Pew Global Attitudes Survey, the authors looked at data from a heterogeneous set of 34 countries that have recently transitioned to democracy or possess autocratic regimes. Their findings reveal that those citizens who have greater access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) express a greater demand for democracy, as well as a perceived lower supply of democracy than those who do not. It thus follows that ICT use impacts the way in which citizens demand and perceive democracy. Those who are more exposed to information online, tend to be more critical of their regime and express a higher demand for democracy. Therefore, the Internet can be considered to have significant impacts on political attitudes and value formation.

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In relation to previously expressed arguments that the Internet may facilitate new forms of social capital through interactivity and exchange (Martin, 2008:5), the content creator and the content consumer "merge" in the absence of hierarchies (Yildiz, 2002:54). It becomes clear that emancipative values indeed seem to be on the rise. The theory on the formation of social capital suggests that through interaction on Web 2.0 platforms, users influence one another through the exchange of information, thereby influencing each other's value orientations (Loader, 2007; Martin, 2008). Furthermore, Norris (2001:55) argues that cyberspace is dominated by postmaterialist value priorities, where users are more concerned with self-actualization and issues concerning quality of life, self-expression, individual freedom, cosmopolitanism, and participatory democracy. Thereby, postmaterialist and emancipative values are more likely to spread faster among Internet users than non-users.

Shawney (2017) makes similar arguments by claiming that contemporary social interaction via social media especially among younger generations has drastically changed. Young people today whom she calls "Generation too much information" have been born into "a new age of transparency", one in which individuals are readily giving up privacy for the sake of convenience, be it through ordering products, or communicating with others online (Shawney, 2017:26). The continuing practice of going online and being connected has turned into what she calls a "ritualized documentary practice" of individuals' lives, which has gone so far that the "notion of privacy has become completely meaningless". What has become particularly problematic, according to Shawney (2017) is the fact that some of the websites, particularly social media, are a space where users are becoming increasingly hostile, toxic, and unforgiving. The notion of free speech has gone so far that it has turned into a "shaming culture", one in which not even politicians are left out. A small mistake can have damaging repercussions to public figures and the fact that every single information that has ever been posted online can be accessed at any time, adds to the unforgiving nature of the Internet.

Swigger (2012) argues that a change in the basic value sets of citizens may lead to a number of policy changes that no longer protect the right of privacy, since this is decreasingly becoming a priority of users, paying tribute to Inglehart's scarcity hypothesis. Furthermore, virtual relationships have the potential of altering "the way an individual responds to community and social life", as online socialisation creates a dynamic different from those of traditional agents of socialisation (Swigger, 2012:590). Yet, some countries such as Britain are taking active steps

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in policy making that allow citizens to force companies that dominate the web (Facebook, Twitter, Google) to delete personal information that has been posted (Shawney, 2017).

Despite the scandal and users' openness to sharing personal information online, the evident preference for the right to freedom of expression among social media users supports Norris' (2001) argument that the Internet is dominated by users holding postmaterialist values. Kim (2006) found that individuals who hold more postmaterialist values also appear to be more interested in politics and are more likely to participate in alternative forms of political movements than individuals who hold materialist values. What is especially noteworthy is the fact that postmaterialists express high levels of political interest amid arguably declining political engagement. As such, Kim's (2006) findings can be drawn back to Norris (2001) argument of the overrepresentation of postmaterialist individuals on the Internet; if the Internet is in fact dominated by such individuals and if one is to believe Martin's (2008) argument on the formation of social capital online, then a rise in alternative forms of political movements can be expected.

The majority of research examining the relationship between the spread of ICTs and levels of democracy focuses on the "macro relationship between Internet penetration and government institutions and the political process" rather than the formation of individual's values, attitudes, and behaviours (Stoycheff & Nisbet, 2014:250). The consequences of the omission of research on such formations are that researchers have yet to grasp the full potential and impact of the web on attitudes, values, and behaviour. Nevertheless, Johnson and Kaye (2003) found evidence to support the notion that the Internet may have strong influences on attitude formations and changes. Even though the dynamic between the web and attitudes has not yet been fully established, Johnson and Kaye (2003:27) believe that the use of the Internet serves as a "strong predictor of positive political attitudes". Through the exposure to political information online, citizen interest in politics is heightened and as a result they develop attitudes that are conducive to building political efficacy and the willingness of citizens to engage in political matters.

In this sense, we could apply two dominating theories regarding media consumption and political efficacy. The first theory, the media malaise theory (Cappella and Jamieson, 1997; Mutz & Reeves, 2005) argues that the overall negative coverage on politics generates "cynicism and malaise" and leads to more "negative attitudes toward political instituins" (Chang, 2018: 1001). The virtuous circle theory (Aarts & Semetko, 2003; Norris, 2000; 2001)

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on the other hand, claims that enhanced exposure to political information via the media leads to heightened interest in politics and more positive attitudes toward political institutions. Chang (2018) explores the applicability of these two theories on Internet use and other forms of media and finds that people who frequently read the newspaper, listen to the radio and use the Internet for political more information are more interested in politics (internal efficacy) and are also more likely to feel like they can impact political outcomes (external efficacy).

Anduiza *et al.* (2009: 866) argue that the dynamic between the Internet and changes in attitudes depends on the notion of selective exposure. In this sense, even though politically related information may be readily available to Internet users, it is still up to the individual to decide whether to access that information. For example, receiving news bulletins and newsletters requires active subscription, therefore users need to take active steps to access these websites. Davis (2017: 280) writes that research has shown that people tend to "reside in echo chambers online", meaning that they only tend to follow others who share their own views and beliefs and generally do not read articles that do not support their existing perception of reality or mindsets. The reason for this, so Davis (2017: 280) explains, is because agreeing with someone else and have that person agree with us, is a satisfying experience and thereby prevents people from critically assessing the things they see online.

Runciman (2018:149) refers to this as "groupthink" – "People join because other people join: they want to be where the action is." This "groupthink" can eventually lead to a "sense of tribalism" and identity politics and therefore all "social reinforcement" works in favour of our already existing attitudes and beliefs (Davis, 2017: 149). Based on this, Anduiza *et al.* (2009:866) believe that "the consequences for behaviour and political attitudes would only be valid for certain Internet users", which demonstrates support for the reinforcement thesis, discussed below.

Furthermore, there is a tremendous amount of user generated content that relates to politics, most of which relates to political satire. During the 2012 United States presidential campaign, Obama's team realised the advertisement niche on social media, particularly YouTube. Of approximately 600 000 videos that were posted on the platform, only 5% of the views associated with the content were content from the official presidential campaigns, the rest being associated with user-generated videos (Waxman, 2012).[12] Rill and Cardiel (2013) assert that

[12] http://techland.time.com/2012/08/29/youtube-videos-mentioning-obama-and-romney-reach-2-billion-vews

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despite differing opinions on the impact of the Internet on political behaviour of citizens, it is undeniable that "satirical news programming may intersect with, or even affect" viewers' perceptions of politicians as well as their attitudes and beliefs about political systems (see also Brewer & Cao, 2006; Holbert Hmielowski, Jain and Mori, 2007; Harrington, 2012).

In fact, there has been a rise in preference for satirical news and comedy programs, particularly the United States. Animated programs such as *The Simpsons*, or *Family Guy* have gained increasing popularity and shows such as *Saturday Night Live*, *The Daily Show*, and *The Colbert Report* have begun to overtake conventional news programs as a source of political information (Lewis, 2002; Olbrys, 2005; Purdum, 2011). Rill and Cardiell (2013:1742) believe that this may be an indication that viewing "satirical political news programs" may lead to increased political knowledge as well as cynicism among viewers. Holbert, *et al.* (2011) agree that political satire, whether it spreads via the Internet or television, results in increased criticism toward politicians and politics in general.

2.4 The Internet and Political Behaviour

Dalton (2014), provides an overview of modes of political participation through which citizens can become engaged and involved in politics. Using Verba and Nie's (1972) and Verba, Nie, and Kim's (1978) work, Dalton (2014:38) provides six modes of political participation, the last two of which he adds himself. These modes consist of voting (casting a ballot at elections); campaign activity (promoting political candidates among other potential voters); contacting officials directly (perhaps to express feelings of dissatisfaction); communal activity (working with a group in the community); and finally protest action and other forms of unconventional modes of political action, as well as Internet activism. Therefore, Internet platforms can be seen as a facilitator of several modes of political participation and political movements. This becomes apparent when we consider the crucial role the Web played for mobilisation during the Arab Spring (Burlacu, Tiganus, 2012) or trending expressions of solidarity with *Charlie Hebdo* on Twitter after two terrorists killed 10 members of the French magazine (Herrera-Viedma, Bernabé-Moreno, Martinez Sanchez, 2015).

In March 2015, students from the University of Cape Town called for the "decolonisation" of the university which included inter alia the removal of the statue of British imperialist, Cecil John Rhodes. Under the hashtag movement #RhodesMustFall, a group of students organised themselves on social media (Bosch, 2017). In October later that year, students of the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg responded to a government announcement about an

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increase in tuition fees with the #FeesMustFall movement which spread throughout South African universities (Mudavanhu, 2017). These protests sparked off later movements such as #OpenStellenbosch at the Stellenbosch University which demanded the removal of Afrikaans as a tuition language at the university. Social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook were particularly useful for mobilisation purposes as Bosch (2017) showed.

Luescher (2017:231) argues that through these movements "student activism in South Africa has taken on characteristics of [internet-aged] networked social movements". The use of Internet-based communication, particularly social media such as WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and the like, so Luescher (2017:231) believes, "signals the advent of a new way of mobilising and organising student political power". Indeed, the nationwide protests were so successful that they led to temporary university shutdowns.

Castells (2015) points out an important shift in the way social movements are organised and practiced and explains that spaces of organisation overlap; those are the actual local spaces where action takes place and virtual spaces (cyberspace) where action is planned and debated. Furthermore, Castells (2015:316) points out cyberspace's new forms of democratic power in that they "reconstruct the public sphere in the space of autonomy built around the interaction of local places and Internet networks".

It is reasonable to assume that a change in political values and attitudes is likely to cause a change in political participation (Anduiza, *et al.*, 2009:858). Since the Internet has become available to the general public in the mid-1990s, scholars have been studying its effects on the political participation of citizens. Arguments vary between an optimistic view of the possible benefits of the Internet and sceptical claims that the Internet may even widen the gap between the "haves and have nots" (Kruikemeier, van Noort, Vliegenhart, de Vreese, 2013:904).

Three main perspectives can be identified in the literature those being the mobilisation thesis, the reinforcement thesis, as well as the normalisation thesis. However, recently a fourth theory, the displacement thesis, has been introduced. Below, each thesis will be briefly discussed, and some case studies will be introduced, which made differing findings that support as well as reject the theories introduced here. Since there is "no agreement with regard to the measurement of political participation" online, there is hardly any overarching support for a single theory provided here and some studies even found support for various theses (Vissers, Stolle, 2014:938).

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2.4.1 Mobilisation thesis

The most positive view is held by "cyber-optimists", who emphasise the possibilities of online activities for the involvement of "ordinary citizens in (…) democracy" (Norris, Curtice 2006:2). This view often also called the "mobilisation thesis", suggests that online activities may serve as a substitute mechanism for the facilitation of alternative channels of civic engagement. This could be achieved through political chat-rooms, remote electronic voting in elections, referenda, and the mobilisation of virtual communities which could have the potential to "revitalise levels of mass participation" (Norris, Curtice, 2006:2). This view argues that the more time an individual spends online, searching for political information, the more likely that individual is to engage in offline forms of participation such as voting or signing petitions.

Research by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press has shown that an increasing amount of US citizens have turned to the Internet for political news due to a dissatisfaction with traditional news (Tolbert & McNeal, 2003). Respondents reported that the reason for a preference for Internet use is because it enables individuals to search for any kind of information, rather than receiving selected themes in newspapers and television news. Drawing data from the 1996, 1998, and 2000 American National Election Studies, Tolbert and McNeal (2003:182) explore the impact of the Internet on political participation. Their findings show strong support for the mobilisation hypothesis as "individuals who use the Internet for political news are more likely to participate". Not only do individuals who use the Internet for political news report higher levels of participation, but access to the web alone was a predictor of political engagement. As such, they find evidence for the "mobilizing potential of the Internet during elections" (Tolbert & McNeal, 2003:184).

In light of a decline in political participation especially among younger generations in western democracies, coupled with the rise of the Internet, some arguments have been made that the web itself might be responsible for such a decline. However, Bakker and de Vreese (2011:453) believe that many of such assumptions are "biased by a disproportional focus on institutional and limited measures of participatory behaviour". As Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) have shown, participation has a number of dimensions and the kind of participation depends on time and resources available to citizens. The Internet, however, lowers opportunity costs of participation to a variety of users, most importantly the youth. Furthermore, online participation appears significantly more attractive to younger citizens than traditional forms of participation.

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Therefore, the notion that young people are disinterested in politics and show no motivation to become involved, is overstated (Wring, Henn, Weinstein, 1999; Pirie & Worcester, 2000; Dermody & Hanmer-Lloyd, 2004; Quintelier, 2007; Martin & Schmeisser, 2008; Cammaerts Bruter, Banaji, Harrison, Anstead, 2014). In fact, Bakker and de Vreese (2011:465) found that various types of Internet use are "positively linked to measures of political participation". Although the causal direction of the relationship is unclear in their study, it remains that online activity may have beneficial effects on participation.

Building on similar findings that Internet users tend to be younger and more educated, Yamamoto *et al*. (2015) conducted a web survey of university students in the US. Paying attention to social media and traditional media use, and online and offline political expression and participation, the authors explored the mobilising effect of web-based content. Their findings show support for the mobilisation thesis as a positive overall effect of the Internet on offline participation was measured. Respondents who frequently consume political news online were more likely to participate offline. Specifically, online expression had a mobilizing effect on participation. Yamamoto *et al.* (2015) explain that expressing political views online may increase levels of both, internal and external efficacy which in turn increase turnout (see also Velasquez & LaRose, 2015).

De Vreese (2007:214) asserts that "it is not time spent online (…) that matters but rather the activities that are undertaken". Therefore, whether an individual spends more time on average on the Internet than someone else does not predict whether he or she is more likely to be politically active, both, offline and online. What is of importance is the way in which such an individual engages with content that is seen online and whether that content stimulates participation. As such, differentiations need to be made in terms of studying political behaviour in relation to Internet activity. However, it proves difficult to measure such differences as most surveys question respondents more on whether they spend time online and less about what they do when they search the web.

Research on the Internet and political behaviour so far has predominantly yielded support for the mobilisation thesis. Scholars believe that the Internet has far-reaching consequences not only in terms of society but politics, too. Meaningful political involvement requires an informed citizenry; with the rise of the Internet, citizens are increasingly able to freely access any kind of information, ranging from political news to entertainment and recreation. Through this increased access to information and interconnectedness enabled by the Internet, so scholars

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believe, individuals are able to make informed decisions and are more capable to engage in politics.

2.4.2 Reinforcement thesis

Other theories proposed by "cyber-pessimists" challenge the mobilising effects of the Internet by arguing that the web will eventually "reinforce existing inequalities of power and wealth, generating deeper divisions between the information rich and poor" (Norris, Curtice, 2006:3). Furthermore, this "reinforcement thesis" maintains that the Internet may further contribute to a participation gap between "engaged and disengaged citizens" (Hoffman, Lutz, Müller, Meckel, 2017:1). At worst, the Internet could create a "digital divide" by increasing the power of the elites while disenfranchising the poor who have little access to it (Johnson & Kaye, 2003:10).

Schlozman, Verba, and Brady (2010) explore the relationship between the Internet on both online and offline political participation. Their findings reveal similar results to those of Norris and Curtice (2006), pointing toward a digital divide that is strongly influenced by socio-economic status. In this regard, online participation strongly mirrors offline participation as Internet access reflects socio-economic status components critical for political participation. In other words, less affluent individuals are commonly less likely to be politically active compared to more affluent people, a trend which is also prevalent in online participation (e.g. sharing political news, inviting others to join a political group online, following a politician on social media, donating campaign money online). Therefore, the authors found strong support for the reinforcement hypothesis on online political participation. Furthermore, Schlozman, Verba, and Brady (2010) argue that close attention needs to be paid to what exactly merits the label of online participation, as such actions do not necessarily render the same effect as collective offline action. They therefore agree with Norris' (2001: 230) argument that if political participation that has been facilitated through the Internet derives from the same kinds of people that are already active, "then a possible consequence of the process is the replication – or even – exacerbation of existing political inequalities".

Sylvester and McGlynn (2010), although finding support for the mobilisation thesis, had an interesting approach to demonstrate how the digital divide impacts participation. The authors found that while access to the Internet increases one's likelihood of contacting government officials, location is a strong predictor of low Internet access. The consequences thereof show that people living in rural areas are less knowledgeable about how to navigate the web,

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therefore they are also less likely to seek information online, including political content. Therefore, individuals who live in rural areas are less likely to contact officials online. As such, their findings support the reinforcement thesis, albeit their primary focus does not rest on income, age, and education, but location. This presents a new and distinct approach to Internet research and political behaviour, as most research in this field focuses on demographic variables such as age, income, race, and education. It should be noted, however that their political participation variables that showed significant relationships are limited to contacting government officials. This poses an important omission of possible other findings and limits their results.

Ikeda, Rivhey, Teresi (2013), while acknowledging the positive impacts of the Internet on political participation, believe that such beneficial effects will be eradicated by the introduction and increased spread of smart phones. The authors believe that through the rising usage of "smart technologies", which are meant to minimize and eventually even "eliminate the need for browsing" will result in users using mobile phones in a rather "homogenous" way, one which is limited to the applications that are installed on their smartphones (Ikeda, 2013:306-307). As such, exposure to other news information that is often promoted through the use of Personal Computers (PCs) and the act of browsing the Internet, is non-existent on mobile phones. In their research, Ikeda *et al.* (2013) provide evidence for a "mobile divide" where young, less educated and less wealthy people tend to use mobile phones more than their counterparts. Therefore, due to limited exposure to political information, they are less likely to be informed about politics and thus less likely to participate. Their findings thus support elements of the reinforcement thesis; younger and less educated and less wealthy people tend to use mobile phones more than PCs for Internet access, thereby "reinforcing existing inequalities in power and wealth" (Norris, Curtice, 2003:3).

The reinforcement thesis, although receiving large support in the early years of the Internet, seems to pose a rather weak stance in the overall literature and more recent research demonstrates the closing gap of the digital divide in established democracies (Vissers & Stolle, 2015; Bode & Dalrymple, 2016). Given the fact that Internet access becomes available to a larger number of people through mobile phones (which also pose lower costs in terms of online activity), whether someone searches the web is no longer predetermined by their socio-economic status and age. While the reinforcement thesis may certainly be found true in less developed countries, the same cannot be said in more advanced industrial democracies (Nam, 2010). However, this might not be the case in less affluent societies.

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2.4.3 Normalisation thesis

The "normalisation thesis", also represents a rather pessimistic view, by proposing that the appearance of the knowledge society has had little impact on changing the participation gap between engaged and disengaged citizens. It further states that technology has done little to alter the political status quo and that radical change is unlikely to happen as the Internet will eventually reflect a "politics as usual" scenario, where participation will be skewed towards more educated and wealthier users (Norris, Curtice, 2006; Hoffman, *et al.* 2017). As such, this thesis is quite similar to the abovementioned reinforcement thesis.

Contrary to previous findings, Steinberg (2015:114) found evidence for a decline of the digital divide where socio-economic factors such as income, education, and race "do not appear to be as strongly associated with cyber participation as they are with traditional participation". Additionally, he found that engagement in cyber participation enabled by the cheaper and easier means of engagement leads to a significantly increased likelihood of voting. Therefore, Steinberg (2015) found evidence that the access gap is closing, thereby challenging the reinforcement hypothesis. Yet, while access to and the use of the Internet has widened and expanded, he maintains that there remains an "issue of usage, whereby access does not necessarily lead to meaningful [political] usage" (Steinberg, 2015:114). Therefore he finds evidence in support of the normalisation hypothesis where more offline politically active individuals are also more likely to be politically active online.

The normalisation thesis has received some support from a number of scholars, who believe that offline behaviour will strongly reflect online behaviour. A study conducted by Feezell, Conroy and Guerrero (2016) focussing on young people and their online behaviour, shows that those individuals who have a more "dutiful" sense of citizenship tend to use the Internet in ways that supports those attitudes than those who use it in an "actualizing" way. The former refers to political participation, motivated by "a sense of civic obligation", while the latter refers to independent citizen action, while still "maintaining a concern for others" (Feezell, *et al.* 2016:97).

While the normalisation thesis may seem like the most plausible approach to explain the relationship between Internet use and political participation, it does not seem to receive overall support from scholars. There appears to be agreement among researchers that the effects of the Internet are either mobilising or reinforcing in nature. Whether these findings are due to

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wrongful measurement or actual evidence is yet to be established as there is no strict consensus to be found on how to measure Internet use in relation to political participation.

2.4.4 Displacement Thesis

Finally, the "displacement hypothesis" suggests that "time spent online could actually displace time formerly devoted to social and political purposes" (Hoffman, *et al.*, 2017:1). This view holds that the more an individual spends time on the Internet or operating technological devices, the less likely he or she is to devote remaining leisure time to pursue civic activities. As a result, Internet use would contribute to the weakening, instead of the strengthening of citizens' civic and political engagement. Yet, there exists little evidence to support this hypothesis.

Some argue for negative implications of the Internet where users are increasingly becoming alienated from the outside world and consequently shut themselves out from actual political events that are relevant, thereby refocusing their value priorities (Davis, 1999; Noveck, 2000) which ultimately leads to a "generation lost to mediated isolation and irresponsibility" (Malila, 2016:78). However, many of these claims have been found to be untrue in more recent studies.

Hoffman *et al*. (2017:2) explored the way in which escapism, "a key motivation for media use that describes a temporary escape from life", affects online political participation in their study which included over 700 Facebook users in Germany. Findings revealed that while the majority of respondents predominantly use Facebook for escapist purposes, they are likely to be confronted with political information. Particularly those users who use it for productive purposes are likely to become politically engaged while those who use the platform in a passive, non-interactive way shy away from online political participation. While these findings hold true for social networking websites such as Facebook and Twitter, they apply less to platforms such as Snapchat or Instagram (whose main focus lies on the publishing of pictures, rather than written content). Therefore, Hoffman *et al.* (2012), while finding some evidence for the displacement thesis also found overwhelming evidence for the mobilisation thesis. These findings reveal that while users might visit these platforms for non-political reasons, they are likely to be exposed to content that may spark political interest and engagement.

As the case studies in this literature review demonstrate, there is little evidence to suggest that the Internet has a displacing impact on citizens and their political involvement. Even if individuals use the Internet for recreational purposes only, this does not imply that they are participating less in politics as a result of limited time, taken up by searching the web. There

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are few if any studies that fully support the displacement thesis and even those who take its possible effects into consideration make findings that show stronger support for other theses as the case study of Hoffman *et al.* (2017) demonstrates.

2.5 Understanding the Dynamic between the Internet and Individuals

The Internet containing various platforms, is a technology developed through human knowledge, thereby it is arguably a form of "social capital" on its own. (Delli Carpini, 2011). The Internet has had a significant breakthrough in since it was launched, demonstrating its potential for transformation across various fields, ranging from technology, economy, and society; as the Internet continues to grow, it "promotes change at the heart of the social structure: in politics, and the distribution of power across society" (Bertola, 2010:323).

The Internet itself functions under a quite distinct architecture from that of traditional telecommunication networks, such as the telephone, television, or even telegraph. Contrary to these traditional networks which are controlled by a single few operators, constraints in terms of access of the Internet are quite different – instead of a one-way kind of communication, the Internet enables users to connect in a near infinite number of ways (Bertola, 2010:324).

To date, researchers have struggled to determine the direction of the causal relationship between the Internet and political attitudes, values, and behaviour. It can be argued that the reason why it is so difficult to establish the direction of such a relationship is that it entails a cycle of interaction, creation, and observation where participants become consumers as well as creators through means of interaction. When a user uploads information online, he/she creates content, thereby becoming a content creator in the formation and discussion of information. However, while uploading information online, users also see other information, which they themselves have not generated, thereby becoming consumers, something Jenkins (2006) refers to as "participatory culture". Through the "immediate and inexpensive access to media" across the globe, information online is becoming increasingly diversified, not to mention the relatively low levels of monitoring that enable users to freely express themselves, thereby exchanging differing views and ideas, up to a point where a number of governments have begun to "centralise content control over the internet" (Bertola, 2010:326).

This argument is supported by Bode and Dalrymple (2016:315) who argue that social media "users are likely to influence and be influenced by their respective networks". Consequentially, influential actors such as political candidates, for example, are likely to have a "great amount

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of influence over" their followers, who in turn may influence their own followers. It is, therefore, worth pointing out that the Internet should be regarded in terms of its functions as a medium through which changes in attitudes, values, and behaviour are being enabled, rather than simply looking at the content which users upload. In other words, it can be seen as a facilitator of changes in attitudes, values, and behaviour.

Looking at the rise of new media, it becomes clear that its emergence is very recent in comparison to that of old media. The Internet has come a long way in a very short amount of years since the creation of the first computer in 1958, which covered almost half an acre. Therefore, research on the medium has generated inconclusive results, with scholars and scientists disagreeing on what the impact of new media on the population may be. Taking into consideration that new media has only begun to emerge post-2004 with the launch of Facebook and YouTube, research on the medium has only been conducted for just over a decade.

2.6 Internet use in South Africa

The effects of Internet and social media use on democracy remain largely unexplored in the South African literature. Therefore, it is a relatively new field of research in the country. Research has focused mainly on qualitative approaches that seek to determine how hashtags are used to mobilise protestors. The quantitative data that is available is limited to access and usage and rarely explores real relationships between usage and political attitudes and values. This gap may largely be attributed to low access rates to the Internet in the country compared to advanced democracies that have almost universal access. Thus, research has been focused on who are the haves and the have nots in the development and emergence of the South African network society. As such, the literature cannot be divided into the various theories that revolve around Internet use and democracy. However, there are certain themes that stand out.

One of the prominent themes is the strong focus on the digital divide in the country. There appears to be a consensus in the global literature that individuals with a higher socioeconomic standing are more likely to have greater Internet access. This does not only apply to broadband connections but also cellular and wireless connections (Tolbert & McNeal, 2003; Sylvester & McGlynn, 2010; Schlozman, Verba & Brady, 2010; Nam, 2010). Especially in the South African context, there is a strong focus on the digital divide that points out who has the highest levels of access to the Internet.

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Thus, there a need to consider which segments of the South African population go online before any generalisations or assumptions about impacts and effects can be made. Wasserman (2002) points out that the Internet, a technology constructed by western, developed countries, is dominated by English websites. According to Internet World Stats (2018)[13] English is the most spoken language online, constituting a quarter of all content, followed by Chinese and Spanish. Yet, English does not even fall among the top three languages spoken in South Africa (BusinessTech, 2015[14]). Although English is the language mostly used in public life and the media, it is not as widely spread and understood as one might think. According to the South African Household Survey (2017), only 1.4% of black, 21.8% of coloured, 39.2% of white, and 91.5% of Indian South Africans speak English at home. In total, only 17.6% of all South Africans speak English outside the household. Therefore, it is likely that large segments of the population cannot access the Internet in a meaningful way because they do not understand the languages spoken on various platforms and websites.

Beger and Sinah (2012) point out that the digital divide in South Africa is still dominated by race, socioeconomic status and geographical location. This can be attributed to apartheid policies which foresaw that only 10% of urban dwellers – who were mostly white and living in prosperous neighbourhoods – benefited from ICT developments (Bosch & Mutsvairo, 2017: 74). As a result, many disadvantaged groups in South Africa did not reap the immediate benefits from the introduction of the Internet in 1994, as they had little to no access and therefore largely remained technologically illiterate. According to Statistics South Africa (2016)[15], the black population in South Africa still lags behind in terms of educational attainment, while whites and Indians have the highest proportion of post-secondary level of education. Both groups also have the lowest proportion of individuals with the lowest levels of education. This indicates that although there has been a substantial growth in the black middle class in South Africa, the black population still faces hardships in terms of education and income, which in turn reflects on their access to the Internet and their ability to search for meaningful information online.

Another factor that may exacerbate the extent of access to the web are costs. According to World Bank[16], South Africa remains one of the most unequal economies in the world, with a Gini coefficient of above 0.6 in 2015. Furthermore, the richest 10% of South Africans hold

[13] https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm?utm_source=lasindias.info/blog
[14] https://businesstech.co.za/news/general/104497/the-most-spoken-languages-in-south-africa/
[15] http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/Report%2092-01-03/Report%2092-01-032016.pdf
[16] https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/southafrica/overview

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approximately 71% of net wealth while the bottom 60% hold about 7%. Bearing these statistics and the general high costs of Internet access in South Africa in mind, we can conclude that not everyone in the country can afford to go online as frequently as the upper classes, not even via mobile phones. Conducting a study on South African activists' use of nanomedia and digital media for mobilisation purposes, Bosch, Wasserman and Chuma (2018) find that the use of social media is not as popular as recent hashtag movements lead us to believe. While Twitter is mostly used to inform journalists of planned activities such as protests, it is not a popular tool for mobilising the masses. One activist interviewed mentioned that "they rarely use their social media accounts because Internet access is expensive and poor citizens often do not have money to purchase data, even when they have access to smartphones or tablets" (Bosch, Wasserman, Chuma, 2018: 2164).

The digital divide further spans across age groups in South Africa. Research by the Pew Research Center indicates that in the world's largest economies, the Millennial generation's (term used to usually describe those individuals reaching adulthood in the early 21st century) access to the Internet is nearing almost 100%. By comparison, just about half of South African Millennials indicated that they have access to the Internet (Poushter, 2016). However, at the time of publication, strong evidence for a digital divide could be found, where younger people had higher access to the Internet. Of all respondents aged 18-24, 52% indicated that they had access to the web compared to a third of 35+-year-olds.

Therefore, it is evident that there are several barriers that stand in the way of universal access to the Internet in South Africa. These barriers include language, geographical location, and severe economic, material and educational inequalities, coupled with age and high costs of going online. Due to these factors, we may see that different segments of the population have different levels of access and as a result, the web's effects on political attitudes and behaviour might differ as well.

2.7 Assessment of the Literature and Conclusion

There appears to be a consensus that the Internet has facilitated a change in attitudes and value preferences among its users. The web itself, which has arguably pushed the process of globalisation to new dimensions, has aided in the spread of ideas and beliefs, which have consequently impacted the formation of attitudes and values. Stoycheff's and Nisbet's (2014) study confirms that people in newly established democracies and autocratic regimes, who use the Internet frequently are becoming increasingly critical of their own government, thereby

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changing their attitude positions towards politicians and politics. Post-material and emancipative values are receiving rising support, especially among younger generations, who frequently visit the web. The absence of hierarchies on several platforms makes the Internet an attractive venue for discussion and deliberation for young people and through these processes; certain values are spreading faster and are adopted more frequently.

Norris (2001) early on made the argument that the Internet is dominated by postmaterialists, as it is an attractive platform for those individuals who oppose certain hierarchies to express themselves. The overarching presence of such emancipative values is thus likely to enforce similar, already existing values among users which creates a stronger sense of postmaterial value priorities through the formation of social capital online (Martin, 2008). At the same time, regular Internet users appear to be far less reluctant to share personal information on the web and thereby their value of privacy declines as argued by Swigger (2012) and Shawney (2017). The Cambridge Analytica scandal pays tribute to the wide array of personal information individuals are ready to make available to anyone who wishes to access it.

When it comes to the Internet and political behaviour, opinions differ widely; proponents of the mobilisation thesis maintain that the Internet has a large potential to mobilise citizens to engage both online and offline. The increased amount of information available to the public could lead to a more informed citizenry that makes better informed decisions. Proponents of the reinforcement thesis disagree and believe that already existing socioeconomic inequalities will be reflected by Internet usage where more wealthy citizens will reap the benefits of the web by having better access than poorer classes. Supporters of the normalisation thesis on the other hand believe that online political participation will reflect offline participation as those who are more likely to be engaged offline will also be engaged online. The displacement thesis predicts a quite different effect and maintains that the Internet will have distorting effect on political participation as time that could be used to engage in democratic action will be spent online. By reviewing the literature, it becomes clear that the mobilisation thesis has received most support, albeit with mixed results. Researchers appear to be undecided about the exact effect of the web on political behaviour due to the fact that research has yielded mixed outcomes. Taking into consideration that the web is a recent development in human history, it is likely that its exact effects will only be established in the future as its dynamic still needs to be understood in full.

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In terms of the South African context, we can only make assumptions based on effects of the Internet on political attitudes and behaviour. Research in the country has shown the existence of a strong digital divide, where (mostly young) white and Indian people have the highest levels of access. Thus, it is plausible that these groups are affected the most by the Internet and social media as they are most likely to go online compared to coloured or black people.

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Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Surveys have been revolutionised since their introduction in the 1940s and have ever since changed the way research is conducted. New research technology has since enabled the simplified measurement of public opinion and political culture based on empirical observations (Kavanagh, 1983:13) and statistical analysis tools now allow for the identification of behavioural and attitudinal patterns in relation to sociodemographic variables. The work of Almond and Verba (1963) and their colleagues have shown the immense value of survey research in political science and today, many researchers make use of survey analysis to demonstrate findings and prove hypotheses.

Qualitative research through interviews or focus groups on the other hand, highlights the value of social interaction in bringing forth new ideas or approaches to certain issues. Topics can be explored in far more detail than through limited survey questions because the dynamic within this type of research is far more flexible and dynamic (Burnham, *et al.*, 2008).

In combination, both quantitative and qualitative research have the capacity to complement each other by making up for the other's shortcomings. This research follows a multi-methods approach which combines quantitative with qualitative analysis. This will be done through an analysis of quantitative survey data, obtained from the Afrobarometer Round 6 survey of 2015, and complemented by a qualitative analysis of focus group discussions with students from Stellenbosch University.

3.2 Part I: Quantitative Analysis

3.2.1 Quantitative methods

Quantitative data analysis is the most popular way of collecting data among social scientists. Data is obtained through means of survey questions from a relatively large sample of respondents that are representative of a larger population group. Answers are then given numerical values and transferred into a "computer-readable format" (Neuman, 2008:14). The value of quantitative data analysis is that it allows to make generalisations about an entire population and provide evidence of how two variables might be connected, thereby providing crucial insight into social patterns that are useful to government and other organisations

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(Blaikie, 2010:23-24). Dependent and independent variables are clearly defined through hypotheses that seek to "test and validate theories through falsification[17]" (Wheeldon & Ahlberg, 2011:8). Quantitative studies typically use deductive[18] approaches to analysis, meaning that hypotheses are formed, followed by the gathering and analysis of data based on "existing assumptions about knowledge" (Wheeldon & Ahlberg, 2011:9).

Survey research has been widely used since the 1940s and has proven to be a particularly useful tool to collect data and provide evidence about social phenomena. Since then, surveys have revolutionized social sciences; Brady (2000) explains that sample surveys have the capacity to gather data about almost any topic so that only a few thousand randomly selected respondents can accurately represent opinions of populations reaching the millions. Brady (2000:47) also tells us that surveys are not only useful to provide descriptive accounts, but they can also "assess causes and impacts of events" thereby having the power to provide explanations for events or changes within societies. Consequently, he believes that surveys score very high on the following dimensions of research: *Range of Applicability* (the amount of data that can be gathered using this method); *Linkage to Theory* (the strength of the relationship between theory and method and whether both complement each other); *Conceptual Richness* (the flexibility of the method to study theoretical concepts and its ability to aid in the development of new ones); C*apacity for Confirming Theories about Politics* (referring to the method's power of making causal inferences and confirming theories); and finally *Policy Relevance* (the ability of surveys to address policy questions) (Brady, 2000:48).

Mattes (2013) notes that while there is a considerable amount of quantitative research carried out in South Africa by psychologists and sociologists, there is a lack of contributions made by political scientists. Of those who do publish their work on South African politics, society, and democracy, very few are situated in South Africa or are in fact South Africans. Mattes (2013:488) believes that this is not due to a lack of interest by researchers but rather due to a "lack of basic numeric literacy (…) and statistical skills". This research study seeks to contribute to the filling of this gap or "minority tendency" through secondary data analysis of the Afrobarometer Round 6 survey.

[17] Falsification refers to the manipulation of data or information so that the final outcome of analysis does not reflect accurate results (Wheeldon & Ahlberg, 2011).
[18] Theorising in a deductive direction means to begin one's research on the basis of a "theoretical proposition that outlines the logical connection among concepts" and then moving on to concrete evidence or findings that stand to support or oppose already existing theories (Neuman, 2008:59).

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Neuman (2008:30-333) lists further advantages of secondary data analysis. One of such advantages is that researchers can use the data to test their own independent hypotheses to determine trends within given populations. Furthermore, it is a cost-effective type of research as it relies on already obtained data, consisting of numerous variables (Singleton & Straits, 2009:9-10).

However, some disadvantages are that researchers sometimes use data that is not suited to measure particular research questions or hypotheses and as such should always consider which type of secondary data they are using (Neuman, 2008:333). Researchers also face the risk of ecological fallacy where units of analysis do not match, i.e. the units of analysis "for which the researcher has empirical evidence and the units for which he or she wants to make statements (Neuman, 2008:169). Other risks that may be encountered on secondary quantitative data analysis are the issues of reductionism [19] and spuriousness[20]. Additionally, the researcher should be wary of the way in which data were gathered and documented and should thus make use of reputable survey organisations (Neuman, 2006:306).

3.2.2 Survey Research

The quantitative analysis of this research is done on a cross-sectional[21] level that only looks at data obtained from the Afrobarometer Round 6 of 2015 survey and theorises in a deductive direction, drawing from secondary data. The theoretical aspects that have been outlined in the literature review serve as a foundation on which research questions and hypotheses are formed. An analysis of the survey data is intended to contribute to the theory by determining whether one or more theories apply to the South African context.

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that focuses on conducting public attitude surveys focusing on democracy, governance, and economic conditions in 37 African countries. It was founded in 1999 by Dr Michael Bratton, Dr Robert Mattes, and Dr E Gyimah-Boadi and initially surveyed 12 countries, including South Africa.[22] Fieldworks are conducted on the basis of face-to-face interviews based on a random sampling method of up to

[19] Reductionism refers to the efforts of a researcher to explain "macro-level events using evidence about individuals", thereby using evidence of an individual to make generalisations about the population (Neuman, 2008:169)
[20] Research outcomes are considered spurious when a researcher believes to have discovered a relationship between two variables, but actually oversee a third variable or factor that is the real cause (Neuman, 2008:171).
[21] A cross-sectional design looks at information involving a large number of cases at a single point in time in order to determine relationships between variables (Burnham, *et al.*, 2008:59).
[22] http://afrobarometer.org/about

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2,400 people. The sample is intended to represent a cross-section of the voting age population in all countries. The sample design is a "clustered[23], stratified[24], multi-stage[25], area probability sample[26]" to ensure the inclusion of all population groups. All interviewers are trained prior to the beginning of their fieldwork and teams, consisting of four interviewers and one field supervisor, are deployed to ensure high-quality data (Afrobarometer, 2018).[27] The survey is designed to tap several societal themes, ranging from tolerance, governance, and political participation to gender equality and identity.

Therefore, the Afrobarometer is considered a suitable source of secondary data analysis, as it follows the procedures to ensure a true representation of the entire population and makes use of trained interviewers which lowers the risk of falsified outcomes. Data from the Afrobarometer is used in hopes of overcoming the above-mentioned limitations of quantitative survey analysis.

3.2.3 Methodological foundation

This study mostly draws from Stoycheff's and Nisbet's (2014) methodological approach, discussed in chapter 2 but also considers methodologies of other researchers. These methodologies primarily make use of survey results and therefore quantitative analysis. The primary dependent variables that can be observed throughout the literature are socio-demographic variables, such as age, gender, race, education, religious affiliation, income, socio-economic status, and location of respondents (Bimber, 1999; Best & Kruger, 2005; Norris & Curtice; Bakker & de Vreese, 2011; Moeller, *et al.*, 2014). Due to limitations posed by the Afrobarometer questionnaire, only a few of these variables are included in this study (age, race, gender, education, and urban-rural location).

Swigger (2012:590) argues that the rise of Web 2.0 and specifically social networking sites has a significant impact on the values that individuals hold. He argues that people, who are actively

[23] Clustered sampling is a random sampling technique that consists of several stages and is used to include large geographic areas in which aggregated units are selected on a random basis of which samples are drawn (Neuman, 2006:233).
[24]Stratification improves the accuracy of a sample because relevant information about the population already exists, which enables the division of the sample into "homogenous groups or strata" of which random samples are taken (Burnham, *et al*., 2008:104).
[25] Multi-stage sampling is similar to that of stratified sampling in the way that the population is divided into groups or areas from which the samples are drawn. Countries are usually divided into constituencies of which a sample is drawn and then "a sample of voters within the selected constituencies" (Burnham, *et al*., 2008:104).
[26] Area probability sampling refers to the equal likelihood of all people living in the same of being included in a sample (Burnham, *et al.*, 2008:103).
[27] http://afrobarometer.org/surveys-and-methods/sampling-principles

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sharing information have begun to "value the right of free expression more and the right of privacy less". His research provides evidence that the Internet, while becoming a fundamental aspect of most people's everyday lives, has begun to shape and change the way people perceive several things, including values and beliefs. Norris (2001:55) argues that cyberspace is dominated by postmaterialist value priorities, where users are more concerned with self-actualization and issues concerning quality of life, self-expression, individual freedom, cosmopolitanism, and participatory democracy. Thereby, postmaterialist values are more likely to spread faster among Internet users than non-users.

Given the fact that the Afrobarometer Round 6 survey does not measure materialist versus postmaterialist value preferences *per se*, this study looks at variables that measure emancipative value preferences that look at respondents' opinions regarding government control and female leadership. It also looks at the extent to which participants prefer different types of governments besides democracy.

Johnson and Kaye (2003) measure political attitudes by looking at respondents' political interest, campaign interest, intention to vote, trust in the government, and party closeness. Stoycheff and Nisbet (2014) also include measures of demand for democracy and perceived supply of democracy in their research to determine whether Internet exposure influences citizens' perceptions of democracy. Similarly, this study looks at participants' interest in public affairs, and the frequency of discussing politics with others while also looking at perceptions of democracy and satisfaction with democracy. To determine whether there is a difference in attitudes towards politicians among participants, measures of trust toward politicians and democratic institutions are included. These measures are based on findings that suggest that Internet users are more sceptical of political leaders and their intentions (see Tedesco, 2007; Knobloch-Westerwick & Johnson, 2014; Vissers & Stolle, 2014). Furthermore, party closeness is included as a dependent variable to assess whether online activity impacts citizens' party preferences.

As mentioned in previous chapters, Dalton (2014:38-39) lists six types of political action that citizens can take. Citing Verba and Nie (1972) and Verba, Nie, and Kim (1978) Dalton (2014) lists 1) *voting*, 2) *campaign activity*, 3) *contacting officials directly*, and 4) *communal activity* as four general types of political behaviour and adds 5) *protest and other forms of contentious politics* as well as 6) *Internet activism*. This study closely follows Dalton's (2014) identified modes of political participation by looking at participants' membership in groups or

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organisations and their attendance at community meetings, whether they voted, their campaign activity, how often they contact officials or leaders about an issue, and finally citizen action (which includes requesting action from government, contacting the media, contacting a government official to ask for help or make a complaint, and participating in a demonstration or protest march). Norris and Curtice (2006) take a particularly close look at voting, campaign-, cause-, and civic-oriented forms of participation by grouping several modes of participation into one of these categories. Sylvester and McGlynn (2010) attempt to measure how Internet usage affects contacting officials, while Vissers and Stolle (2010) focus more on protest and other forms of contentious politics. The variables chosen for this study thus closely reflect those used in previous studies.

3.2.4 Operationalisation of Variables

All variable items and their respective coding categories can be viewed in Appendix B (*page 117)*

Independent and control variable

Contrary to ordinary research that looks at many independent variables and how they affect one dependent variable, this research will focus on three independent variables (internet and social media use for political news, and a scale consisting of both, social media and general internet use for acquiring political news) and how it affects a large number of dependent variables (political values, attitudes, and behaviour). Question twelve of the Afrobarometer asks respondents "How often do you get news from the following sources?*" A) "Radio", B) "Television", C) "Newspapers", D) "Internet"* and *E) "Social Media such as Facebook or Twitter"*. This research will only focus on the responses provided by response category D) and E). Answers will be filtered by respondents who indicated D) Internet and E) Social Media and will then be divided into *users* and *non-users*. The question measures usage on a 5-point scale coded *0)"Never", 1)"Less than once a month", 2)"A few times a month", 3)"A Few times a week",* and *4)"Everyday"*. Those respondents who indicated answers 4 to 1 will be regarded as Internet and Social Media *users*, whereas respondents who indicated 0 will be regarded as *non-users.* Most respondents that fall into the user category indicated that they use the Internet to obtain political news at least a few times a week (Internet 12.7%) or every day (Internet 24.4%). "*Don't know*" categories will be removed from inferential statistical tests (non-descriptive analysis) to ensure that data results only represent users and non-users. The distribution of Internet users who indicated either 4), 3), 2), and 1) (48.8%) versus non-users

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(51.2%), and Social Media users (47.8%) versus non-users (52.3%) will thus represent a more or less equal distribution of respondents, which is important for statistical tests. Furthermore, a scale variable consisting of both Internet and social media use (IntSocMe) is calculated and treated as a third independent variable[28]. A scale measuring both Internet and social media use might offer some additional insight that could tell us whether a combined use of Internet and social media for political news influences political attitudes and behaviour of respondents.

Dependent variables

The dependent variables in this study are grouped together under political values, attitudes, and behaviour.

1. Political values

Political values are measured through a battery of questions where respondents are asked with which statement they agree the most. More specifically, emancipative value preferences are tested. Respondents who are more likely to believe that government should interfere when it comes to press freedom and freedom to join any organisation and oppose gender equality in terms of leadership, are believed to have lower emancipative value sets. Furthermore, respondents are asked questions pertaining to their valuing of democracy, as grounded in Nisbet's and Stoycheff's (2014) findings.

Political values
Q16: Government restrictions vs. freedom to join any organisation
Q17: Media should be free to publish anything vs. government restrictions

[28] SPSS allows its users to collapse two or more indicators into a single variable by computing a new index. This is a useful tool when one wishes to measure a single concept through a set of indicators, to assess the degree to which concepts are conceptually different, to reduce a large number of variables or indicators to a smaller and more relevant list, and to aid in the process of constructing an index or separate variable (Field, 2009:629). However, even though the wording in some questions in a survey might be similar, this does not imply that they measure the same concept so prior to creating a new variable or scale, it is paramount to conduct a factor analysis to determine whether there exist clusters of attitudes amongst respondents[28]. Prior to creating a separate variable consisting of measures of Internet and social media use for obtaining news, a factor analysis was conducted and the suitability of data for factor analysis was assessed. Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed that the coefficient of both variables took on a value of .771. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .5[28], while the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity reached statistical significance of .000. The principal component analysis revealed the presence of two components, one of which had an eigenvalue exceeding 1 (1.771), explaining 88.57% of variance. The component matrix revealed strong loadings (.941) for factor one. Additionally, a reliability analysis was performed, showing strong reliability statistics (Cronbach's α= .870) of the two separate variables. After performing a factor analysis and reliability analysis, we can conclude that both variables are strongly related and thus we can move on to creating a scale (See Appendix xx for a detailed syntax of the procedure).

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Q18: Men make better leaders vs. women should have equal chances of becoming leaders
Q28: Approval of differing forms of government

2. Political attitudes

Political attitudes are measured by looking at questions that measure citizen interest in public affairs, frequency of discussing political matters, their views of democratic processes in South Africa, citizens' views of government and the country, as well as views of political institutions.

Political attitudes
Q13: Interest in public affairs
Q14: Frequency of discussing political matters
Q40: Perception of extent of democracy
Q41: Satisfaction with democracy
Q52 a,b,e,f,g,m,n: Trust in democratic institutions and officials [29]
Q53a-g: Perceptions of government officials' involvement in corruption[30]

3. Political behaviour

Political behaviour is measured by looking at respondents 'turnout, their campaign and communal activity, as well as citizen action.

Political behaviour
Q19: Membership in religious groups or voluntary organisations
Q20: Attending community meetings, raising an issue
Q21: Voting (reasons for not voting)[31]
Q23a-d: Campaign activity

[29] Trust has been recoded into a scale variable consisting of four separate variables measuring trust in government institutions and officials. Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed the presence of many coefficients above .3. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .788, which meets the recommended value of .6, while the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity reached statistical significance of .000. The principal component analysis revealed the presence of one component, which had an eigenvalue exceeding 1 (2.804), explaining 56.07% of variance. The component matrix revealed strong loadings (Q52a=.862; Q52b=.844; Q52f=.837; Q52e=.764) for factor one. Additionally, a reliability analysis was performed, showing strong reliability statistics (Cronbach's α= .785) of the separate variables. After performing a factor analysis and reliability analysis, we can conclude that the variables (Q52a; Q52b, Q52f, Q52e) are strongly related and thus we can move on to creating a scale measuring trust (See Appendix xx for a detailed syntax of the procedure).

[30] Corruption has been recoded into a scale variable consisting of seven separate variables measuring trust in government institutions and officials. Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed the presence of many coefficients above .3. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .877, which meets the recommended value of .6, while the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity reached statistical significance of .000. The principal component analysis revealed the presence of one component, which had an eigenvalue exceeding 1 (3.948), explaining 56.39% of variance. The component matrix revealed strong loadings (Q53a=.773; Q53b=.834; Q53c=.845; Q53d=.765 Q53e=.710; Q53f=.657 Q53g=.649) for factor one. Additionally, a reliability analysis was performed, showing strong reliability statistics (Cronbach's α= .872)

[31] Voting recoded into dichotomous variable with categories presenting "voted" and "did not vote"

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Q24a-d: Contacting officials/ leaders about an issue [32]
Q27a-e: Citizen action

Demographic variables

Demographic variables will be employed to determine any sociological differences in usage based on age, gender, race, urbanity, and education. *Age* (Q1) is measured as a scale variable ranging from 18 to 95. For the purpose of a simplified analysis, age will be recoded into a new variable, grouping different age cohorts together. The new variable will measure respondents' age in five different categories representing 1) *18-24*, 2) *25-34*, 3) *35-44*, 4) *45-54*, 5) *55+* age groups. *Gender* (Q101) is a dichotomous variable, with male coded 1) (49.9%) and female coded 2) (50.1%). *Race* (102) is a 5-point variable representing black/African, white/European, coloured/mixed race, South Asian, and other respondents. Because very few cases represent "other" race groups, and because no specific groups are named, this attribute will be removed from the analysis. *Education*[33] (Q97) is measured on a 10-point scale ranging from no formal education to post-graduate education, which will be recoded into 4 categories coded *1) Post-secondary/tertiary education, 2) Completed secondary school, 3) Incomplete secondary school, 4) Primary or less*. *Urbanity* (URBRUR) is a dichotomous variable, with urban coded low (66%) and rural coded high (34%).

3.2.5 Statistical Tests

Crosstabulations are employed to make inferences about the impact of the Internet on the independent variables. Crosstabulations are the most popular way to demonstrate bivariate analysis and provide an appropriate statistical measure to summarise data and direction of the correlation. The value of crosstabulations is that they can be used descriptively to compare

[32] Contacting officials and leader has been recoded into a scale variable consisting of four separate variables measuring frequency of contacting government officials. Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed the presence of many coefficients above .3. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .768, which meets the recommended value of .6, while the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity reached statistical significance of .000. The principal component analysis revealed the presence of one component, which had an eigenvalue exceeding 1 (3.948), explaining 56.39% of variance. The component matrix revealed strong loadings (Q24a=.701; Q24b=.771; Q24c=.823; Q24d=.817) for factor one. Additionally, a reliability analysis was performed, showing strong reliability statistics (Cronbach's α= .737) of the variables. After performing a factor analysis and reliability analysis, we can conclude that the variables (Q24a, b, c, d) are strongly related and thus we can move on to creating a scale measuring contact.

[33] Original variable consisting of 1) *No formal schooling*; 2) *Informal schooling only*; 3) *Some primary schooling*; 4) *Primary school completed*; 5) *Some secondary school / high schoo*l; 6) *Secondary school / high school completed*; 7) *Post-secondary qualifications, other than university*; 8) *Some university*; 9) *University completed*; 10) *Post-graduate*

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groups by looking at and comparing frequencies that fall into each category, as well as inferentially to examine a relationship between two variables through statistical tests.

The choice of correlation coefficients (summary statistics) is based on the levels of measurement of different variables. On an ordinal by ordinal level, Spearman's rho is used and on an ordinal by nominal level, Cramer's V is considered. The correlation coefficients determine the strength and direction of the associations or relationships between two variables and significance level (the significance level must be less than p=.05) which suggests that the probability of obtaining our results by chance is less than .05% and allows one to reject the null hypotheses (that there is no relationship between our variables).

To make the analysis clearer and to reduce cases, scale variables will be computed for measures of contacting officials (Q24), trust (Q52), and perceptions of corruption (Q53). This is done by first conducting a factor analysis (or extraction) to determine which variables represent clusters of attitudes among respondents. Kaiser's criterion[34] is used to assist in the decision concerning how many factors are retained for building a scale. Additionally, scree tests[35] are used for a visual representation of the eigenvalues of each factor. Furthermore, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO)[36] is included as is the Barlett's Test of Sphericity[37]. In the correlation matrix, only variables with a correlation coefficient of .3 and above are selected to be included in the creation of a scale. In order to determine the reliability of each scale, Cronbach's alpha is used and only values of .7 or higher will be deemed acceptable in proceeding to build a scale (Field, 2009:675).

3.3 Part II: Qualitative analysis

3.3.1 Qualitative methods

Qualitative research, on the other hand, assumes that meaning is "personal and subjective and to be best understood through social interaction" (Wheeldon & Ahlberg, 2011:80). It typically

[34] Kaiser's criterion or the eigenvalue rule presents factors and how they load together. Only factors with an eigenvalue of 1.0 or above are retained. The eigenvalue of a factor represents the proportion of total variance explained by each factor (Field, 2009:640). It is kept in mind that Kaiser's criterion faces some criticism in the sense that it tends to "overestimates the numbers of factors to retain" (Field, 2009:641). However, this obstacle is overcome with the aid of scree tests.
[35] A scree test plots each factor's eigenvalue and thus allows for an inspection of the plot to determine at which point the curve changes its direction (Field, 2009:641).
[36] The KMO statistic can take on values between 0 and 1. A value of .6 and above is considered to represent "distinct and reliable factors" (Field, 2009:647).
[37] Barlett's measure tests the null hypothesis that "the original correlation matrix is an identity matrix" and therefore tests for levels of significance (Field, 2009:660).

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relies on individual accounts to make sense of phenomena and events and research is conducted in an inductive[38] direction. Qualitative research involves several research techniques, including interviews, focus group discussions, or direct observations, to name a few (Bless, Higson-Smit, 2006). This study will make use of focus group discussions to enrich the quantitative findings.

It was mentioned earlier that previous research on the relationship between the Internet and political behaviour predominantly relies on quantitative measures that explore the *what* in the relationships between predetermined variables. This limits researchers' findings as they are confined to use strictly defined variables in surveys instead of exploring the possibility of the existence of other important variables. This research study seeks to fill the gap in qualitative research in the overall literature by exploring the *how* and the *why*. Given South Africa's large youth bulk, this cohort is a suitable target group. Ideally, the outcome of this study should answer the following questions; *how* do young university students engage with political information online? *Why* is the web more appealing to them than conventional news media?

Litosseliti (2003:1) defines focus groups as a "carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment". Focus groups serve to explore specific topics and participants' views, attitudes and experience relating to that topic through group interaction. Because they represent a more natural environment based on conversation flow and exchange, they offer some advantages over methods such as interviews and participant observation. Just like in real life, members of the group discussion are likely to influence and be influenced by others. Therefore, the emphasis of focus groups rests primarily on the interaction among individuals. What makes this so unique and valuable is that this might allow the researcher to "uncover new, open-ended pathways for discussion" through minimal intervention (Litosseliti, 2003:3,5).

Most importantly, while focus groups should follow a set line of questions, they do allow for flexibility. This means that the moderator does not need to follow a strict questionnaire as is often the case in formal interviews but can deviate somewhat from the prescribed questions if an interesting topic should arise (Litosseliti, 2003:17).

The interaction among individuals can be very helpful for researchers to understand how some individuals feel about a certain topic. Participants "bounce ideas off each other and can agree

[38] Inductive reasoning seeks to either develop or confirm a theory by exploring empirical evidence and working "towards more abstract concepts and theoretical relationships" (Neuman, 2006:60). Part of an inductive reasoning is *grounded theory* building which involves the formulation of new theoretical ideas, rather than testing already existing ones (Wheeldon & Ahlberg, 2011:9).

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or disagree", thus demonstrating different views or stimulating thought among other participants who will, in turn, present their view in the discussion (Burnham, *et al.*, 2008:130). Therefore, topics can be explored in far more detail than in a survey because no strictly prescribed set of questions are asked, but new ideas and viewpoints can be explored that the researcher may previously not have thought of (Burnham, *et al.*, 2008:129-132).

Like all research methods, focus groups have limitations. One limitation is that it is impossible to be certain of how representative the groups are of the selected population. Therefore, representativeness cannot be guaranteed and "results are qualitative and indicative, rather than valid for the whole population" (Burnham, *et al.*, 2008:134). Thus, they can by no means replace surveys to make predictions about behaviour. Furthermore, over-dominant group members can distort data as they leave little room for other members to express their views (Berg, 2001:188). Litosseliti (2003:21) suggests that the best method to deal with over-dominant participants is to moderate them firmly, yet non-intrusively and to fall back to the topic guide to make sure the discussion remains on track. Furthermore, rules of behaviour should be clearly outlined prior to the discussion as to ensure that all participants are aware of certain ground rules, such as "asking people not to talk at the same time" or interrupting each other (Litosseliti, 2003:21).

Additionally, participants should be carefully selected in accordance with the research question or hypotheses in order to "avoid a disruptive mismatch among participants and between topics" (Litosseliti, 2003:22). It is also possible that group members may withhold certain information or provide misinformation to avoid embarrassment or to admit to a lack of knowledge. It therefore requires a good moderator to "grasp the various contextual parameters" by paying attention to people's language, body language, and emotional or visual cues (Litosseliti, 2003:24). This can be achieved through a friendly and open environment and by ensuring participants that there are no right or wrong answers, that every contribution is valid and to encourage them to be forthcoming with their views and opinions.

The advantages and disadvantages of qualitative and quantitative research approaches respectively are debated, and each appears to have its own strengths and limitations. Neuman (2006:13) contrasts both approaches and points out their differences; a quantitative approach measures objective facts with a focus on variables while the qualitative approach focuses on social reality and cultural meaning. Furthermore, quantitative research places a high emphasis on reliability of outcomes and the absence of values, the separation of theory and data, and an

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independence of context, while qualitative research places emphasis on authenticity, is not opposed to the presence of values, allows data and theory to be fused and is situationally constrained. The largest difference between the two approaches is the number of cases; qualitative research studies few cases and subjects and places its analysis on subjects whereas quantitative research relies on statistical analysis (Neuman, 2006:13). Thus, the main advantage of a mixed methods approach is that inferences can be made based on quantitative outcomes and can be studied in further detail through qualitative research and vice versa.

3.3.2 Focus Groups

Once relationships based on quantitative analysis have been determined, the second part of the research study aims to focus on qualitative data collection through focus group discussions with students at Stellenbosch University. Following **H1**'s assumption that Internet users tend to be younger, this seems to be an appropriate focus group that could offer valuable insight into the nature of young people's engagement with the Internet. It might also offer useful insight into the political behaviour of this cohort, which appear to be less engaged in politics than its older counterparts (Wattenberg, 2016; Tracey, 2016; Resnick & Casale, 2014; Malila, 2016; Dalton, 2007; Schoemann & Puttergill, 2007; Mattes 2012; Mattes & Richmond, 2015; Seekings, 2014).

In order to recruit participants, ethical clearance will be sought from Stellenbosch University first, followed by a request at the University to allow the researcher to conduct focus group discussions with students from the department of political science. This serves to determine whether there exist differences in the way students engage with the Internet and social media. For the purpose of this research study, a focus group discussion was conducted with humanities postgraduate students at Stellenbosch University.

Burnham, *et al.*, (2008:133) suggest that the best method to record the data during focus group is to video and tape record the discussion. This makes it easier for the researcher to "identify the contributions of each individual" and to "capture the enthusiasm, intensity and dynamics of group interactions". This method also makes the transcription and analysis of data easier for the researcher. Therefore, this study makes use of video recordings during group discussions. The information obtained during these discussions was handled with confidentiality and participants were guaranteed anonymity. Participants were asked for permission to video record the group discussion for research purposes. Any data that has been collected during the interviews that could disclose participants' identity, or otherwise sensitive information is stored

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on a password-secured personal computer which only the researcher will have access to. The venue for discussions should ideally be an open, friendly, and neutral environment that enables members of discussions to feel comfortable and safe. This requirement was met to the best of the researcher's abilities.

Focus group discussions serve to enrich the outcome of this study through more in-depth discussion of the Internet and social media use. They are aimed at gaining a better understanding of the way in which university students engage with content online and how this affects their attitudes, values, and behaviour. Despite the weaknesses of focus group discussions mentioned above, it is nevertheless expected that the outcome will provide rich and meaningful information and valuable insights in the way in which especially young university students engage with the Internet and social media.

3.3.3 Discussion Procedure

Upon arrival at the venue of discussion, all participants were handed consent forms which they were asked to read and sign to affirm that they understand what the research is about, their role in the study, as well as possible risks associated with participating. Before the discussion was initiated, participants were given labelling stickers on which they were asked to write their first name to make it easier to engage with each other on a first name basis. Thereafter, participants were asked to be seated in one of the chairs provided in the setting and to quickly introduce themselves to others to get to know one another. Seats were organised in a circle so that participants all faced one another and refreshments in the form of coffee, water, and doughnuts were freely available.

Before the discussion was initiated, the moderator provided an overview of the purpose of the focus group and the expected duration of the discussion. Furthermore, ground rules which were also outlined in the consent form were established. Those rules stated *inter alia* that participants were free to leave the discussion at any given time if they felt uncomfortable. Everyone present was reminded that should anyone at any point during the interview insult or attack another participant on grounds of race, gender, background, political affiliation or other, he or she will be asked to leave immediately. All students available were encouraged to engage with each other in an open, polite, and orderly fashion and in a way that allows everyone to participate and to be heard. Participants were reminded that everyone has different opinions and that no single point of view would be discredited, discarded, or seen as unimportant or irrelevant. Participants were also informed that the discussion was to be videotaped for the sole purpose

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of research. Assurance was given that recordings were only available to the researcher and her supervisor.

3.3.4 Focus Group Questions

We know from the literature and the findings of this research that young, educated people are most likely to use the Internet and social media. We shall also see that both mediums decrease their levels of trust in politicians and increase their belief that government officials are likely to be involved in corruption. At the same time, we do not find many other significant correlations between Internet and social media use and civic values, attitudes, and behaviour compared to other age groups. This raises further questions that might not be answered through quantitative measures alone but might be answered through focus groups. These questions *inter alia* ask *why* are young people less likely to trust politicians the more time they spent online? *What* leads them to believe in high levels of corruption among government officials? If the Internet and social media do not significantly affect their attitudes, values and behaviour, are there other variables which might be affected that we have not previously thought of?

To make focus group discussions take on a more natural flow, Krueger (1998:21) distinguishes between five different types of questions with distinct purposes. These categories are opening, introductory, transition, key, and ending questions. The opening question is designed to be answered quickly and to give each participant an opportunity to speak before moving on to more in-depth questions. This type of question is not intended to give any useful insight to by measuring attitudes of respondents but rather create a "sense of community in the group" (Krueger, 1998:23).

Introductory questions "introduce the general topic of discussion" and often give participants an opportunity to think about their experience related to the research topic. These types of questions are designed to spark conversation among participants but are not necessarily designed to be analysed. Usually, they are open-ended questions that allow members of focus group discussions to tell others what they think or how they feel about the topic (Krueger, 1998:24).

Transition questions quite simply serve to link introductory and key questions by asking participants to go into more detail about their experiences with, or feelings about the topic at hand. These questions typically "make the connection between the participant and the topic of investigation" (Krueger, 1998:25).

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Key questions constitute the body of focus group discussions and typically consist of two to five questions. They are the ones that require the most attention in the analysis and therefore the most amount of time throughout the discussion as these questions seek to tap the underlying thing that the researcher is trying to measure (Krueger, 1998:25).

Finally, ending questions "bring closure to the discussion" and allow participants to reflect on previous comments (Krueger, 1998:26). These questions can either be "all-things-considered" questions that can help participants clarify their point of view, "summary questions" where the moderator gives participants a short summary of the key points that emerged from the discussions and asks them whether it is accurate, or "final questions" which functions as a type of insurance question (Krueger, 1998: 25-26).

Opening Questions:

- Tell us who you are, where you are from, and what you are writing your research project on.

Introductory Questions:

- Do you have a social media account?
- Do you have access to the Internet outside of university?

Transition Questions:

- Where do you primarily get your political news from?
    - Why do you prefer the Internet and social media as source of political news?

Key Questions

- Would you say that the Internet and social media have made you more critical and distrusting of politicians and institutions?
- Do you think the Internet and social media have made you more politically active and informed?
    - Would you say that social media has the potential to dissuade you from voting?
- Do you think the Internet and social media have the potential to improve democracy?
- Thinking about your own beliefs and views, do you sometimes expose yourself to different points of view that do not reflect your own?

Ending Question

- What is your favourite and least favourite thing about social media?

3.4 Multi-methods research

3.4.1 Combining quantitative and qualitative methods

In his book, *Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods,* Morgan (2014:4) warns his readers of the difficulties related to combining different methods in a research study. He explains that the use of two methods not only involves more work but integrating them

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effectively so that each complements the other is a challenge on its own. Simply presenting more results or different kinds of results does not necessarily improve the quality of one's work. Particularly the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods can be challenging because researchers are often seduced by the distinct strengths of each approach and fall into the trap of methodological eclecticism, or "an anything goes approach" and in the end fail to integrate both findings in a meaningful way (Morgan, 2014: 4).

It is therefore essential to identify the kind of integration of methods that is suitable for a specific research study. Morgan (2014: 10-11) mentions three types of mixed methods approaches that each have distinct characteristics and strengths. The first one is a *convergent* approach, where the same research question is addressed "using both a survey and qualitative" approaches. The second methodology of using mixed methods is that of *additional* coverage, where "different methods (are assigned) to different purposes" so that the project can "pursue a wider range of research goals" than would be possible with any single method (Morgan, 2014:73). Finally, *sequential* contributions work quite similarly to additional coverage, however the former assigns different purposes to each method while the latter uses the "results of one method to enhance the effectiveness of another" (Morgan, 2014: 11).

Therefore, this research study makes use of sequential and additional coverage. The insights gained through the quantitative analysis serve as a foundation upon which focus group questions are formulated. In other words, statistical outcomes should tell us which areas to address in order to pose meaningful questions to group participants. Yet, both quantitative and qualitative findings are assigned equal importance in the outcome of the study and simply serve the purpose to enrich overall findings.

Blaikie (2010:218) explains that some writers regard the use of mixed methods as a "third methodological movement", apart from quantitative and qualitative studies. He summarises the advantages of mixed methods. First and foremost, the combination of quantitative and qualitative research can mitigate the shortcomings of one method through the strengths of another and thus produce "more comprehensive evidence" that compliments each other (Blaikie, 2010:219). Mixed methods also help to answer several aspects of a research question that cannot be answered by a single approach. This means that depending on whether the

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researcher seeks to investigate in an inductive or deductive direction, mixed methods can help to produce results in all of these directions at the same time by offering abductive reasoning[39].

Miles and Huberman (2002:396) suggest that,

> "both quantitative and qualitative inquiry can support and inform each other in important ways. Narratives and variable-driven analyses need to interpenetrate and inform each other. Realists, idealists and critical theorists can do better by incorporating other ideas than remaining pure."

Nie and Erbring (2000) suggest that time individuals spend online is less relevant than what they are doing online, i.e. which websites they visit and how they engage with those websites. This is because meaningful interaction with politically related information is required to impact values, attitudes, and behaviour. Therefore, the quantitative aspect of this study aims to answer whether people who do get their news online differ from those who obtain them elsewhere, whereas the qualitative aspects seek to answer how individuals are shaped by their online experiences.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter provides an overview of the methodologies used to measure the relationship between Internet and social media and civic attitudes, values and political behaviour. It outlines the benefits and shortcomings of both, quantitative and qualitative research in the social sciences. Furthermore, the chapter lays out the methodological foundations upon which this study is based, and the specific steps undertaken to obtain reliable outcomes for the quantitative data analysis and points out which variables will be used to test the hypotheses. Lastly, this chapter explains the discussion procedure of the qualitative focus group discussions and which questions will be asked during the session and finally argues that if used together, both quantitative and qualitative methodologies can complement each other by mitigating each other's shortcomings. The following chapter focuses on the quantitative analysis of data obtained from the Afrobarometer Round 6 of 2015 survey.

[39] Abductive research on the other hand, can answer both, the 'what' and the 'why, however it tends to answer the 'why' by "producing understanding rather than an explanation" (Blaikie, 2010:85-88). Abductive reasoning typically relies on the "expertise, experience, and intuition of researchers" (Wheeldon, Ahlberg, 2011:117).

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Chapter 4: Quantitative Analysis

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 explores whether a relationship between Internet and social media use and political attitudes and behaviour exists. This is achieved through quantitative measures that explore correlations between the dependent and independent variables. The first part deals with the demographic aspects of Internet and social media use by looking at age, education, gender, race and location of respondent. Thereafter, the findings of research question 1 are discussed and interprepeted in relation to the global literature. Following this, research question 2 is addressed and alternative measures of determining relationships suggested and implemented through the introduction of a third research question. Finally, findings are compared to those of previous studies to gain an understanding of the context of the results.

4.2 Research Question 1

Before we can move on to choose the appropriate statistic to determine relationships, we must inspect whether the data in the sample is normally distributed. This needs to be done because the appropriate measures of correlation depend on the distribution of the data. Inspection of the values of skewness and kurtosis show that the data used in this sample is non-parametric, therefore non-parametric measurements are used. In the table below, each demographic variable shows the values of correlation (Spearman's rho) between Internet, social media, and the scale consisting of Internet and social media use (IntSocMe) and the dependent variables. Spearman's rho is especially useful because it can be used to calculate correlations between ordinal by ordinal and ordinal by scale variables.

Research question 1 of this study asks, *Which demographic groups predominantly use the Internet and social media to source political news?* Table 1 displays the bivariate correlations for the demographic groups and Internet and social media use. It should be noted that in this case, the demographic groups will be treated as independent variables since the Internet or social media use cannot affect ones likelihood of being male or female, for example.

Correlations for demographic variables

Age 18-24 (1); 25-34 (2); 35-44 (3); 45-54 (4); 55+ (5)	Internet	-.295**
	Social Media	-.358**
	IntSoc	-.348**
Education Primary or less (1); Incomplete secondary schooling (2);	Internet	.475**
	Social Media	.427**

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Completed secondary schooling (3); Post-secondary/tertiary education	IntSoc	.486**
Gender Male (1); Female (2)	Internet	-.058**
	Social Media	-.026**
	IntSoc	-.047*
Race[40] Black/African (1); White/European (2); Coloured/mixed race (3); South Asian/Indian (4)	Internet	.254**
	Social Media	.123**
	IntSocMe	.187**
Location Urban (1); Rural (2)	Internet	-.205**
	Social Media	-.147**
	IntSocMe	-.187**

Table 1: Correlation table for Internet and social media use, and Internet and social media scale and demographic variables

4.2.1 Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 states that regular Internet and social media users are more likely to be younger and more educated than non-users. The strong, negative correlations between Internet, social media, and our Internet-social media scale indicate that use decreases as age increases. Similarly, we find strong correlations between education of respondent and Internet and social media use. The more educated the respondent, the more likely he or she is to use the Internet or social media to source political news. Therefore, we find support for Hypothesis 1 and the existence of a digital divide in South Africa that is dominated by age and education.

4.2.2 Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 states that gender of respondent does not determine access to or frequency of Internet and social media use. Indeed, we find quite weak, negative correlations between Internet, social media, and IntSocMe use and gender of respondent, indicating that men are more likely to go online. While the correlations are significant, they are also weak, indicating that there is only a slight difference in terms of usage between men and women.

4.2.3 Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 states that there is a difference in terms of Internet and social media use based on race. We find weak to moderate correlations between race and using the Internet to source political news and a weak correlation between using Social Media and our IntSocMe scale and race. The cross table and charts below provide us with further insight.

Crosstabulation for Internet use by race

	Never	Less than once a month	A few times a month	A few times a week	Every day	Total
Black	55,6%	4,5%	7,3%	11,9%	20,7%	100,0%

[40] Relationships measured using gamma as a measure of association

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	82,1%	80,0%	74,7%	70,6%	63,6%	75,5%
White	19,2%	4,1%	5,9%	14,2%	56,6%	100,0%
	3,5%	9,0%	7,5%	10,2%	21,3%	9,2%
Coloured	50,5%	2,8%	8,9%	15,3%	22,4%	100,0%
	11,7%	8,0%	14,4%	14,2%	10,8%	11,8%
Indian	40,2%	3,7%	7,3%	18,3%	30,5%	100,0%
	2,7%	3,0%	3,4%	5,0%	4,3%	3,5%
Total	1214	100	174	303	583	2374
	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Table 2: Crosstabulation showing row and column percentages Internet use by race

Margin of error: 2.05%

Table 4 shows the frequency of usage for each race group. The first significant thing we observe is that the large majority of white respondents (70.8%) uses the Internet either every day, or a few times a week, compared to 48.8% of Indian, 37.7% of Coloured, and 32.6% of black respondents. The bar chart below also shows us that for black respondents, the proportion of those that never use the Internet is significantly larger than responses for any other category. By comparison, the gap in terms of frequency of usage narrows for all other race group and for white respondents, the proportion of those who use the Internet every day is larger than any other proportion. Therefore, we see that the race groups that use the Internet to source political news the most are white and Indian respondents. The groups that are the least likely to use the Internet are coloured and black respondents.

The same pattern applies to social media use. Of all respondents, black people are the least likely to use social media to source political news, followed by coloured and Indian respondents. White respondents are significantly more likely to use social media every day than any other race group.

Therefore, we find that there is a difference in terms of Internet and social media use based on race, where white respondents are most likely to go online, followed by Indian respondents. Hypothesis 3 which states that there is a difference in terms of use based on race is therefore supported.

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Bar chart Internet use by Race

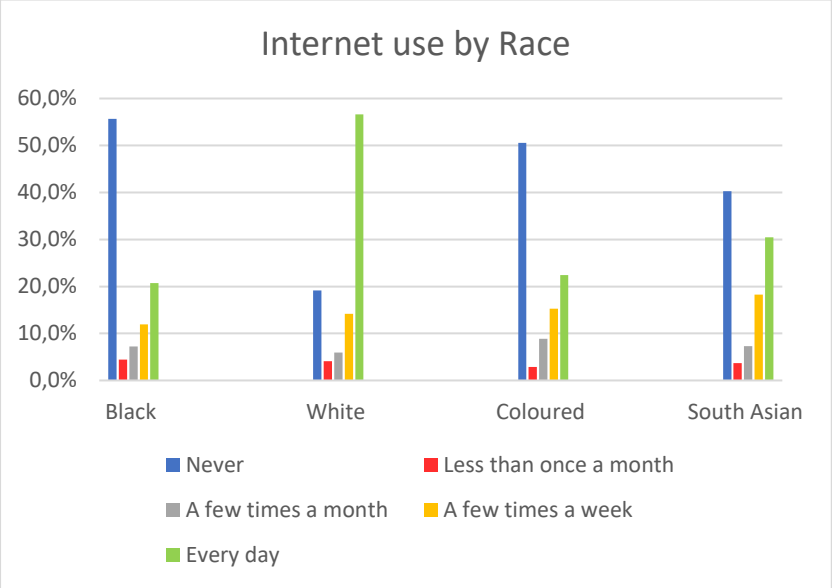

Figure 1:Bar chart showing percentages of Internet use by Race

Bar chart Social Media use by Race

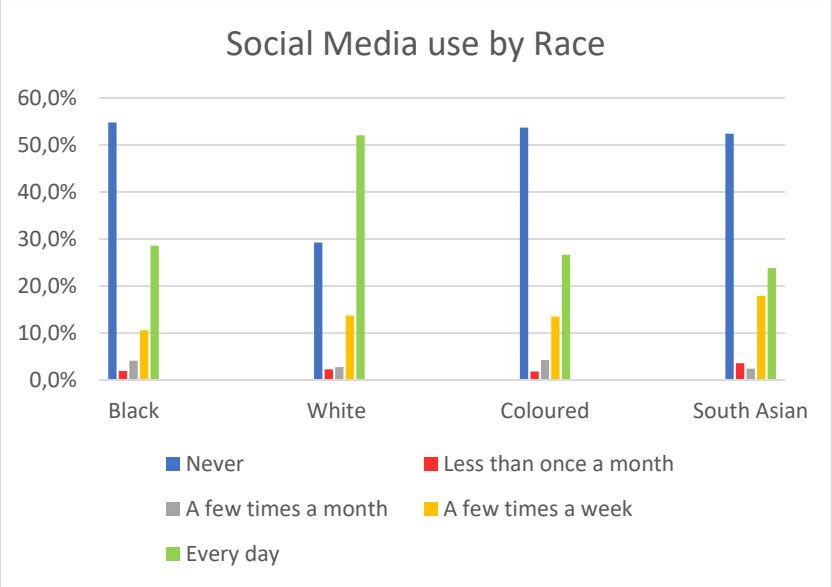

Figure 2: Bar chart showing percentages for Social Media use by Race

4.2.4 Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 states that Internet and social media users are more likely to live in urban, rather than rural areas. There is a negative correlation between all three independent variables and location of respondent, meaning that the more someone goes online, the less likely they are to live in rural areas. The bar chart for Internet use by location displays a clear linear relationship between Internet use and location of respondent. As usage increases, the proportion of

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respondents who live in rural areas decreases. While the proportions of rural and urban respondents fluctuate for social media use, we can still see that urban respondents are more likely to use social media than rural respondents. Hypothesis 4, therefore, finds support.

Stacked bar chart Internet use by Location

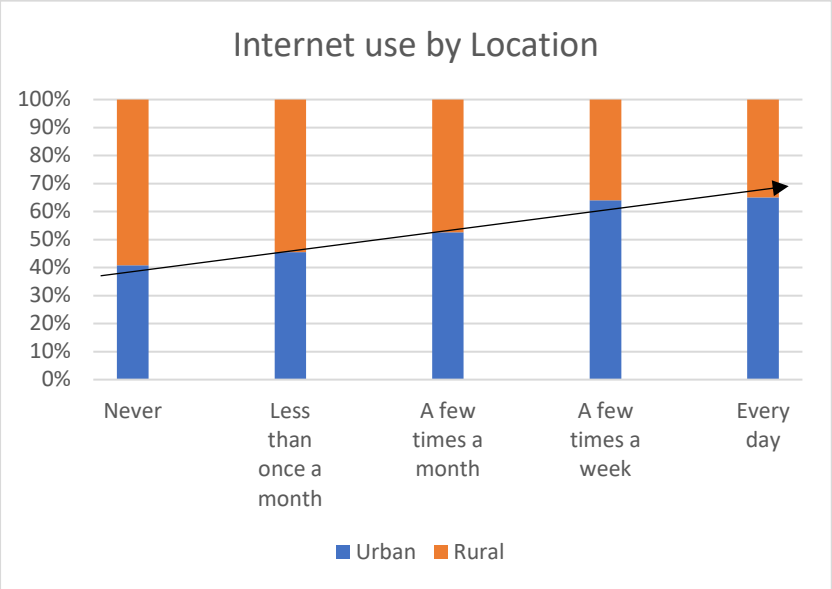

Figure 3: Stacked bar chart showing percentages of Internet use by location

Stacked bar char Social Media use by Location

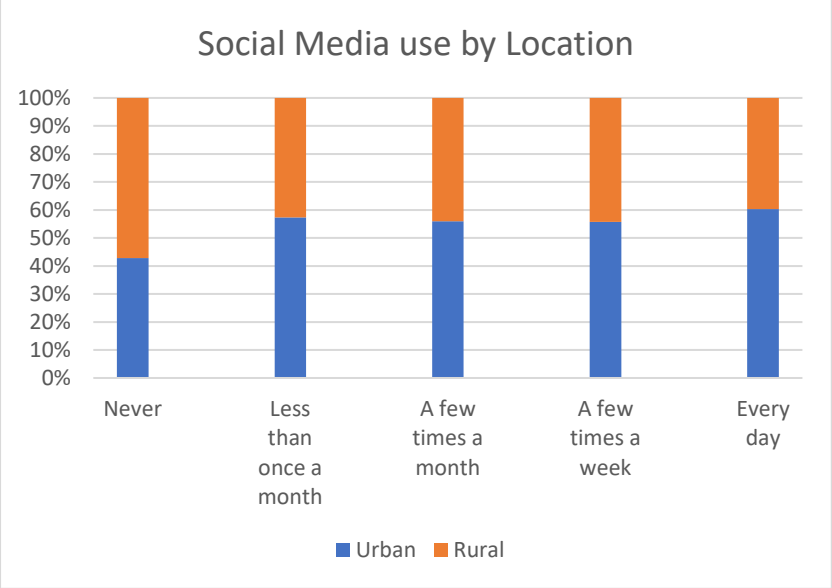

Figure 4: Stacked bar chart showing social media use by location

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4.3 Interpretation: Research Question 1

4.3.1 Hypothesis 1

Bakker and de Vreese (2011:452) point out that Internet use is "not a unidimensional concept and thus does not – if at all – affect all groups in society similarly". Instead, its effects depend on a variety of "personal and social characteristics" that are unique to each individual and how they choose to access the medium. South Africa is no exception when it comes to distinct characteristics that determine access and use of the Internet and social media. One group that appears to be a consistent predictor of Internet use are young people. Rainie (2012) claims that the use of social media has gained increasing popularity among young adults and is often preferred as a source of political information. Norris and Curtice (2006) believe that a "digital divide" of online activity among Internet users, where younger and more educated people appear to be more active, has ensued. Yamamoto *et al.* (2015: 895) share this opinion and claim that particularly young adults make advanced use of social media to grow social capital that develops "user-generated political content" by expressing political views and engaging in debates online.

Hoffman (2017) also finds that people who use the Internet more frequently tend to have higher levels of education. Moeller, de Vreese, Esser and Kunz (2014:696) support this statement by claiming that "digital natives" or "netizens", i.e. people who spend a lot of their time browsing the Internet, tend to be more educated. These findings hold for most studies and find support in this research study. There appears to be a digital divide in the South African context as already pointed out by various scholars (Bosch, 2010; 2012; Bosch & Mutsvairo, 2017; Gwaze, Hsu, Bosch and Luckett, 2018; Bosch, Wasserman, Chuma, 2018; Bosch, 2018), where younger people are more active online. We also find support for the normalisation thesis which states that the more educated benefit more from online activity and are also more likely to be active online.

4.3.2 Hypothesis 2

When it comes to the gender of the respondent, the large majority of available studies on the Internet and politics find no meaningful relationship between gender of respondent and Internet use. Although men have slightly more access globally than women, their interaction with the medium does not differ remarkably. Published data by Statista (2017) shows that Internet access in terms of gender in South Africa displays no large differences. Men (51%) have only slightly higher access to ICTs than women (49%). This may also explain the small differences

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in Internet and social media usage to source political information among men and women. Given that men have slightly higher access, they are also slightly more likely to use the Internet or social media to obtain political news.

4.3.3 Hypothesis 3

When it comes to the race of the respondent and Internet and social media use, we find that white respondents are more likely to go online than any other race group. Of all race groups, black respondents are the least active online, followed by coloured and Indian respondents. According to Statistics South Africa (2016)[41], the black population in South Africa still lags behind in terms of educational attainment, while whites and Indians have the highest proportion of post-secondary level of education while both groups also have the lowest proportion of individuals with the lowest levels of education. Bosch and Mutsvairo (2017: 74) point out that the digital divide in South Africa "mostly reflects one's race, socioeconomic status and geographical status". This indicates that although there has been a substantial growth in the black middle class in South Africa, the black population still faces hardships in terms of education and income, which in turn affects their access to the Internet and their ability to search for meaningful information online. This provides support for the reinforcement thesis which states that previous socioeconomic inequalities are reflected by Internet use as well.

4.3.4 Hypothesis 4

Sylvester and McGlynn (2010) have shown that certain segments of the population, especially those living in rural areas, have lower access to ICTs than people living in urban areas. This may be caused by the difficulty of setting up broadband connections in rural areas due to a lack of infrastructure and uneven terrain. This claim finds support in the results above, although to a somewhat lower extent than anticipated. The analysis showed quite a distinct linear relationship between Internet use and location. Bosch and Mutsvairo (2017: 74) assert that during the apartheid era, only those living in "prosperous urban areas" benefited from ICT developments, and after the "introduction of commercial Internet services in 1994", only those living in those prosperous areas truly benefitted. The unequal access to ICTs and now Internet and social media is thus still affected by location.

[41] http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/Report%2092-01-03/Report%2092-01-032016.pdf

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4.4 Research Question 2

Having established which demographic is more active online, we can move on to determine whether the Internet and social media do influence political attitudes and behaviour of citizens. Research Question 2 of this study asks, "*Is there a measurable difference between Internet and social media users versus non-users in terms of their political attitudes and their behaviour?".*

Correlations between Internet and social media use and IntSoc scale and measures of political attitudes and behaviour

	Dependent variables	Internet	Social Media	IntSoc
H5	**Interest in politics** Not at all interested (0); Not very interested (1); Somewhat interested (2); Very interested (3)	.074**	.059**	.074**
	Discussing politics Never (0); Occasionally (1); Frequently (2)	.119**	.106**	.120**
H6	**Freedom to join organisations**[42] Agree very strongly with statement 1 (1); Agree with statement 1 (2); Agree very strongly with statement 2 (3); Agree with statement 2 (4)	.017	.033	.025
	Freedom of press[43] Agree very strongly with statement 1 (1); Agree with statement 1 (2); Agree very strongly with statement 2 (3); Agree with statement 2 (4)	-.023	-.026	-.028
	Female leadership[44] Agree very strongly with statement 1 (1); Agree with statement 1 (2); Agree very strongly with statement 2 (3); Agree with statement 2 (4)	.041*	.010	.027
H7	**Extent of democracy** Not a democracy (1); A democracy, with major problems (2); A democracy, but with minor problems (3); A full democracy (4)	-.024	.010	-.007
	Satisfaction with democracy Not at all satisfied (1); not very satisfied (2); Fairly satisfied (3); Very satisfied (4)	.002	.037*	.020
	Trust (Scale) Not at all (low); a lot (high)	-.099**	-.069**	-.101**
	Corruption (Scale) None (low); all of them (high)	.101**	.082**	.092**
H8	**Reject one-party rule** Strongly disapprove (1); disapprove (2); Neither approve nor disapprove (3); approve (4); Strongly approve (5)	-.066**	-.063**	-.072**
	Reject military rule Strongly disapprove (1); disapprove (2); Neither approve nor disapprove (3); approve (4); Strongly approve (5)	-.005	-.013	-.010
	Reject one-man rule Strongly disapprove (1); disapprove (2); Neither approve nor disapprove (3); approve (4); Strongly approve (5)	-.034	-.033	-.033
	Reject Apartheid Strongly disapprove (1); disapprove (2); Neither approve nor disapprove (3); approve (4); Strongly approve (5)	.051**	.043*	.050**
H9	**Member of religious group** Not a member (0); Inactive Member (1); Active member (2); Official leader (3)	.082**	.060**	.076**
	Member of voluntary association Not a member (0); Inactive Member (1); Active member (2); Official leader (3)	.060**	.069**	.064**

[42] Statement 1: Government should be able to ban any organization that goes against its policies. Statement 2: We should be able to join any organization, whether or not government approves of it.
[43] Statement 1: The media should have the right to publish any views and ideas without government control. Statement 2: The government should have the right to prevent the media from publishing things that it considers harmful to society.
[44] Statement 1: Men make better political leaders than women, and should be elected rather than women. Statement 2: Women should have the same chance of being elected to political office as men.

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	Attend a community meeting Would never do this (0); Would if had the chance (1); Once or twice (2); Several times (3); Often (4)	-.034	-.042*	-.041*
	Join others to raise an issue Would never do this (0); Would if had the chance (1); Once or twice (2); Several times (3); Often (4)	-.044*	-.033	-.040*
	Voting Voted (1); Did not vote (2)	.060**	.052*	.060**
	Attend a campaign meeting No (0); Yes (1)	.006	.037*	.017
	Attend a campaign rally No (0); Yes (1)	-.020	.001	-.007
	Persuade others to vote No (0); Yes (1)	.007	.015	.011
	Work for candidate or party No (0); Yes (1)	.013	.025	.020
	Contact (Scale) Never (low); Often (high)	-.013	.001	-.004
	Request government action Would never do this (0); Would if had the chance (1); Once or twice (2); Several times (3); Often (4)	.015	.006	-.004
	Contact media Would never do this (0); Would if had the chance (1); Once or twice (2); Several times (3); Often (4)	.088**	.116**	.108**
	Contact official for help Would never do this (0); Would if had the chance (1); Once or twice (2); Several times (3); Often (4)	.037	.060**	.049*
	Attend demonstration or protest Would never do this (0); Would if had the chance (1); Once or twice (2); Several times (3); Often (4)	.011	.056**	.035*

Table 3: Correlation table for Internet and social media use and IntSoc scale and measures of political attitudes and behaviour

Table 2 displays the bivariate correlation for measures of political attitudes and behaviour and Internet, social media use and the Internet social media scale. We quickly come to realise that correlations are quite weak or non-existent. These result could mean one of three things. Either Internet penetration in South Africa is simply not strong enough to exert any effects on the population and this research is conducted to early. Alternatively it could mean that those South Africans that read their news online are not affected by the content. Or it could indicate that we are not measuring the relationship correctly.

We know from the literature as highlighted in chapter two that the digital divide in South Africa is quite large and runs across several sociodemographic variables. For example, we saw that the Internet is dominated by English content that many South Africans do not understand and therefore cannot browse the web in a meaningful way (Wasserman, 2002). Furthermore, educational attainment stands in the way of technological literacy for mostly black and coloured citizens. White and Indian South Africans are the most likely to have higher levels of education that provide them with an advantage to engage with the Internet through technological literacy and higher levels of income (Statistics South Africa, 2016[45]).

These financial inequalities also impact accessibility in South Africa because not everyone can afford to go online due to the high costs (Bosch, Wasserman, Chuma, 2018). We find evidence in this research that reflect these earlier findings. For example, the proportion of white

[45] http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/Report%2092-01-03/Report%2092-01-032016.pdf

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respondents (56.6%) who use the Internet every day is about the same as black respondents (55.6%) who never use it. Therefore, there are clear differences in terms of access and usage when it comes to sourcing political news on the Internet or social media.

Furthermore, Poushter (2016) shows that the digital divide in South Afriaca spans across age and we too, saw earlier that young people are more likely to use the Internet and social media every day compared to older respondents. For example, the statistics in this study indicate that roughly two thirds (62.6%) of 18-24-year olds frequently use the Internet to source political news compared to 31% of 45-54-year olds or 19.8% of 55+-year olds. We could thus deduce from these findings that by virtue of their higher levels of usage, some population groups (e.g. young, white people) are more likely to be affected by Internet and social media than others.

Hence, what if we compare correlations across groups to see whether there are measurable differences between Internet and social media users versus non-users in terms of their political attitudes and their behaviour based on age and race? Although there are no studies conducted in more advanced economies that suggest that comparing correlations among demographic groups might display differences, the South African literature suggests strong indicators of a digital divide. This digital divide is likely to affect the way in which political content online `influences different groups in South Africa.

4.5 Research Question 3

Out of the assumptions that there may be in-group differences in terms of age and race arises a third research question, *Are there measurable differences between Internet and social media users versus non-users in terms of their political attitudes and behaviour based on age and race?*

4.5.1 Comparing Correlations

In some cases, a variable can consist of inherently different categories that differ in many aspects and have little in common other than their common denominator. For instance, we might want to find out whether there is a difference in attitudes among religious men and women regarding abortion. In this case, we would want to compare correlations between the two (religious) genders. To do this, we activate the *split file* command in SPSS. This function splits a single variable into its categories. Once this option is activated, SPSS will produce an output of a correlation for each category of the split file variable. This means that we are now looking at three different variables; the dependent, independent, and split variable. This way,

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we can determine whether the correlation between religiousness and attitudes toward abortion differ between men and women, for example (Field, 2009:191).

In this research study, age and race are used as a split file. This means that all bivariate correlations will be calculated according to the various categories within the age and race variables (e.g. this will show us the bivariate correlation between Internet use and interest in public affairs for black, white, coloured, and Indian respondents, or respondents aged 18-24-years old, 25-34-years old, and so forth).

The tables below present the findings for the bivariate analysis for Internet, social media, and a scale of Internet and social media use and measures of political attitudes and behaviour based on age and race.

4.5.2 Hypothesis 5

Correlations for political efficacy and political interest based on age

		18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
Interest in public affairs Not at all interested (0); Not very interested (1); Somewhat interested (2); Very interested (3)	Internet	-.023	.111*	.131**	.018	.154**
	Social Media	.022	.060	.128**	.035	.110*
	IntSocMe	-.001	.099*	.138**	.033	.138**
Discussing politics Never (0); Occasionally (1); Frequently (2)	Internet	.005	.170**	.080*	.097*	.278**
	Social Media	.033	.109**	.121**	.076	.231**
	IntSocMe	.018	.155**	.108**	.078	.264**

Table 4: Correlation table for Internet and social media use and IntSoc scale and measures of political efficacy and interest based on age

We move on to determine relationships for hypothesis 5 which states that people who spend more time online are more likely to discuss politics and express an interest in public affairs. The first table displays the bivariate correlation between Internet, social media, and the Internet-social media scale for measures of internal efficacy based on age. The first thing we can take away from the table is that people aged 55+ are the most likely to be influenced by going online. We see moderate, positive relationships for all independent variables, meaning that the more time they spend online, the more likely they are to be interested in public affairs and discuss politics. People aged 35-44 show the second strongest correlation, followed by 25-34-year olds. 18-24- and 45-54-year olds show almost no correlation at all. The effects of Internet and social media use on internal levels of efficacy mostly hold for older age cohorts, particularly those 55+, however, we also see some effects for those aged 25-34 and 35-44. Therefore, we find partial support for H5 in terms of age.

Correlations for political efficacy and political interest based on race

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		Black	White	Coloured	Indian
Interest in public affairs Not at all interested (0); Not very interested (1); Somewhat interested (2); Very interested (3)	Internet	.110**	.046	.068	.204**
	Social Media	.083**	.012	.089	.117
	IntSoc	.105**	.038	.071	.189*
Discussing politics Never (0); Occasionally (1); Frequently (2)	Internet	.126**	-.076	.166**	.247**
	Social Media	.102**	-.052	.246**	.298**
	IntSoc	.122**	.012	.200**	.304**

Table 5: Correlation table for Internet and social media use and IntSoc scale and measures of political efficacy and interest based on race

Table 7 displays the bivariate correlation between Internet, social media, and the Internet-social media scale for measures of internal efficacy based on race of respondent. The group which seems to be most affected by going online are Indian respondents who show moderate to strong, positive correlations for both dependent variables. Internet and social media use appear to only affect coloured respondents in terms of discussing politics. For black respondents, we also see weak, positive correlations and no correlations for white respondents at all.

When it comes to race, there is overall support for H5. Apart from white respondents, the likelihood of all other race groups to discuss politics and be interested in public affairs increases the more they use the Internet and social media or a combination of both.

4.5.2 Hypothesis 6

Correlations for emancipative values based on age

		18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
Freedom to join organisations[46] Agree very strongly with statement 1 (1); Agree with statement 1 (2); Agree very strongly with statement 2 (3); Agree with statement 2 (4)	Internet	.037	-.069*	.073*	.046	.121*
	Social Media	.110*	-.053	.072*	.097*	.122*
	IntSoc	.074	-.064	.074*	.065	.115*
Freedom of press[47] Agree very strongly with statement 1 (1); Agree with statement 1 (2); Agree very strongly with statement 2 (3); Agree with statement 2 (4)	Internet	-.044	-.027	.025	-.012	-.060
	Social Media	-.034	-.072*	.018	.046	-.037
	IntSoc	-.055	-.047	.022	.005	-.067
Female leadership[48] Agree very strongly with statement 1 (1); Agree with statement 1 (2); Agree very strongly with statement 2 (3); Agree with statement 2 (4)	Internet	.166**	.048	-.008	.009	.002
	Social Media	.135**	.014	-.041	-.023	-.066
	IntSoc	.158**	.035	-.022	-.021	-.024

Table 6: Correlation table for Internet and social media use and IntSoc scale and measures of emancipative values based on age

[46] Statement 1: Government should be able to ban any organization that goes against its policies. Statement 2: We should be able to join any organization, whether or not government approves of it.
[47] Statement 1: The media should have the right to publish any views and ideas without government control. Statement 2: The government should have the right to prevent the media from publishing things that it considers harmful to society.
[48] Statement 1: Men make better political leaders than women, and should be elected rather than women. Statement 2: Women should have the same chance of being elected to political office as men.

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Hypothesis 6 states that Internet and social media users show greater support for emancipative values (less deference to authority posed by the government) than non-users. Overall, we see rather weak correlations among all age groups. Going online seems to mostly affect 18-24-year olds in terms of female leadership. The more they go online, the more likely they are to support the notion that women should have equal opportunities to be elected as leaders as men. The other significant thing we can take away from the table is that respondents aged 55+ are affected by going online and their belief in freedom of expression. We see a positive correlation between all three independent variables and the desire to join any organisation without government restrictions, meaning that the more time they spend online, the more likely this group believes that one should be able to join any organisation. Although we find other significant correlations for other age groups, they are rather weak. As such, there is some support for H6, but this only holds for people aged 18-24 and 55+ and only in terms of freedom of expression and gender equality.

Correlations for emancipative values based on age

		Black	White	Coloured	Indian
Freedom to join organisations Agree very strongly with statement 1 (1); Agree with statement 1 (2); Agree very strongly with statement 2 (3); Agree with statement 2 (4)	Internet	-.032	.085	.000	.236*
	Social Media	-.012	.134*	-.028	.012
	IntSoc	-.015	.152*	-.006	.166
Freedom of press Agree very strongly with statement 1 (1); Agree with statement 1 (2); Agree very strongly with statement 2 (3); Agree with statement 2 (4)	Internet	-.007	-.134*	-.076	-.279**
	Social Media	-.028	.061	-.007	-.063
	IntSoc	-.015	.082	-.050	-.216**
Female leadership Agree very strongly with statement 1 (1); Agree with statement 1 (2); Agree very strongly with statement 2 (3); Agree with statement 2 (4)	Internet	.015	.024	.101	.206*
	Social Media	.015	-.039	-.056	-.057
	IntSoc	.014	-.007	.023	.109

Table 7: correlation table for Internet and social media use and IntSoc scale and measures of emancipative values based on age

Table 9 displays the bivariate correlation between measures of emancipative values and going online based on race. Again, we see that Indian respondents display the strongest correlations. The more they use the Internet, the more likely they are to believe that one should be able to join any organisation without government restrictions. There is a significant, negative correlation for Indian respondents between Internet use and the IntSoc scale and freedom of the press. This means that the more this group of respondents goes online, the more likely they are to believe that the press should be able to publish anything without government control. We see a similar pattern among white respondents. The more they use social media or a combination of social media and Internet, the more likely they are to believe that one should

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be able to join any organisation and the more they use the Internet, the more they support freedom of the press. There are no significant relationships for coloured or black respondents.

When it comes to the race of the respondent, there is overall support for H6. Specifically, white and Indian respondents are positively affected by Internet use and support for emancipative values. Only white and Indian respondents believe that one should be able to join any organisation without government restrictions and it is also only these respondents who reject the notion of government control on the media and press.

4.5.3 Hypothesis 7

Correlations for measures of perceptions of democracy and political institutions and incumbents based on age

		18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
Extent of democracy Not a democracy (1); A democracy, with major problems (2); A democracy, but with minor problems (3); A full democracy (4)	Internet	-.088*	.007	-.076*	.026	.041
	Social Media	-.051	.050	-.043	.045	.040
	IntSoc	-.082	.034	-.073*	.040	.040
Satisfaction with democracy Not at all satisfied (1); not very satisfied (2); Fairly satisfied (3); Very satisfied (4)	Internet	.082	.047	-.084*	.020	-.056
	Social Media	.078	.100**	-.033	.041	-.029
	IntSoc	.081	.083*	-.069	.045	-.050
Trust (Scale) Not at all (low); a lot (high)	Internet	-.096*	-.007	-.090*	-.115*	-.160**
	Social Media	-.104*	-.022	-.026	-.019	-.127*
	IntSoc	-.103*	-.011	-.068	-.069	-.161**
Corruption (Scale) None (low); all of them (high)	Internet	.102*	.105**	.094*	.097*	.083
	Social Media	.177*	.067	.036	.096*	.061
	IntSoc	.140**	.096**	.076*	.110*	.087

Table 8: Correlation table for Internet and social media use and IntSoc scale and measures of perceptions of democracy and political institutions based on age

Hypothesis 7 states that the more time someone spends online seeking political information, the more likely they are to be critical and distrustful of government. Looking at table 10, we see that going online affects people aged 18-24 in terms of their levels of trust[49] and perceptions of corruption[50]. The more time this age cohort spends online, the less likely they are to trust officials and incumbents and the more likely they are to believe that they are involved in corruption. We see similar effects for all other age groups, however mostly for those aged 45-54 and 55+. The more people aged 45-54 years old use the Internet and social media, the more likely they are to believe that most or all government officials are involved in corruption. On the other hand, the more time people aged 55+ spend online, the less likely they are to trust officials and incumbents. Extent and satisfaction only display weak correlations for age groups.

[49] For detailed description of the computation of trust as a scale variable, please see chapter 3.
[50] For detailed description of the computation of corruption as a scale variable, please see chapter 3.

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Again, we find partial support for H7, however, the age groups that are mostly affected are 18-24 and 55+-year-olds.

Correlations for measures of perceptions of democracy and political institutions and incumbents based on race

		Black	White	Coloured	Indian
Extent of democracy Not a democracy (1); A democracy, with major problems (2); A democracy, but with minor problems (3); A full democracy (4)	Internet	.010	.197**	.036	-.231*
	Social Media	.020	.151*	.127*	-.046
	IntSoc	.016	.170**	.084	-.160
Satisfaction with democracy Not at all satisfied (1); not very satisfied (2); Fairly satisfied (3); Very satisfied (4)	Internet	.052*	.013	.082	.095
	Social Media	.041*	.104	.159**	.203*
	IntSoc	.049*	.046	.122*	.184*
Trust (Scale) Not at all (low); a lot (high)	Internet	-.042*	.072	-.100	-.026
	Social Media	-.049*	.082	-.047	-.160
	IntSoc	-.049*	.117	-.096	-.081
Corruption (Scale) None (low); all of them (high)	Internet	.078**	-.061	-.015	-.089
	Social Media	.096**	-118	-.031	-.071
	IntSoc	.095**	-.086	-.016	-.034

Table 9: Correlation table for Internet and social media use and IntSoc scale and measures of perceptions of democracy and political institutions based on race

Table 11 shows the bivariate correlation based on race. When it comes to extent of democracy, white people who spend more time on the Internet and social media, tend to believe that South Africa is a democracy. Indian Internet users, on the other hand, show opposite effects; the more they use the Internet, the less likely they are to believe that South Africa is a full democracy. Furthermore, we see weak to moderate positive correlations between going online and satisfaction with democracy for coloured and Indian respondents. The more they use social media and a combination of social media and Internet, the more likely they are to be satisfied with democracy in South Africa. We see only weak correlations for black respondents and their levels of satisfaction with democracy, trust, and perceptions of corruption. However, the data does suggest that the more time this race group spends online, the more likely they are to be satisfied with democracy, the less trusting they are of government institutions and officials, and the more likely they are to believe that these institutions and officials are involved in high levels of corruption.

Therefore, we only find weak support for H7, however only for black respondents. Apart from Indian respondents, it appears that the more time people from most race groups spend online, the more likely they are to believe that South Africa is a full democracy and the more likely they are to be satisfied with democracy.

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4.5.4 Hypothesis 8

Correlations for preferences for different kinds of government based on age

		18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
Reject one-party rule Strongly disapprove (1); disapprove (2); Neither approve nor disapprove (3); approve (4); Strongly approve (5)	Internet	-.038	.002	-.027	-.231**	-218**
	Social Media	-.114*	-.052	-.077	-.108*	-161**
	IntSoc	-.064	-.026	-.018	-.187**	-.205**
Reject military rule Strongly disapprove (1); disapprove (2); Neither approve nor disapprove (3); approve (4); Strongly approve (5)	Internet	-.002	.060	-.024	-.084	-.057
	Social Media	-.090*	.042	-.012	-.101*	.010
	IntSoc	-.024	.057	-.020	-.099*	-.037
Reject one-man rule Strongly disapprove (1); disapprove (2); Neither approve nor disapprove (3); approve (4); Strongly approve (5)	Internet	-.071	-.028	.045	-.111*	-.170**
	Social Media	-.204**	-.024	.029	-.028	-.087
	IntSoc	-.136**	-.027	.048	-.068	-.149**
Reject Apartheid Strongly disapprove (1); disapprove (2); Neither approve nor disapprove (3); approve (4); Strongly approve (5)	Internet	.007	.058	.122**	.088	.095*
	Social Media	-.077	.050	.140**	.153**	.106*
	IntSoc	-.028	.062	.149**	.105*	.102*

Table 10: correlation table for Internet and social media use and IntSoc scale and preference for different kinds of government based on age

Hypothesis 8 states that Internet users are more likely to express a preference for democracy over any other form of government. Internet and social media sugges causality on rejection of authoritarian regimes and appear to be strongest for people aged 45-54 and 55+ years old. There is a negative correlation between all three independent variables and support for one-party rule, indicating that the more time these age cohorts spend online, the less likely they are to support one-party rule. Social media seems to affect 18-24-year olds when it comes to one-man rule; the more frequently this cohort uses social media, the more likely they become to reject one-man rule. Similar effects can be observed in terms of Internet use for people aged 45-54 and 55+ years old.

However, when it comes to approval of apartheid, some interesting results arise where we see approval among those, who spend more time online, specifically the 35-44, 45-54 and 55+ cohorts. Additionally, the negative correlation between Internet use and the IntSoc scale for the 55+ age group shows lower levels of support for democracy, the more time they spend online.

Therefore, when it comes to age, H8 is neither proven nor disproven. The age groups that show the strongest rejection of authoritarian rule are those aged 18-24, 45-54 and 55+. However, we also find that some of these groups show support for apartheid, and for the 55+ age cohort, there is a decline in support for democracy the more they use Internet and social media.

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Correlations for measures of perceptions of democracy and political institutions and incumbents based on race

		Black	White	Coloured	Indian
Reject one-party rule Strongly disapprove (1); disapprove (2); Neither approve nor disapprove (3); approve (4); Strongly approve (5)	Internet	-.044*	-.051	-.042	-.075
	Social Media	-.064*	-.015	-.003	-.016
	IntSoc	-.059**	-.014	-.026	-.064
Reject military rule Strongly disapprove (1); disapprove (2); Neither approve nor disapprove (3); approve (4); Strongly approve (5)	Internet	-.010	-.080	-.021	-.276**
	Social Media	-.030	-.028	.011	-.101
	IntSoc	-.022	-.066	-.055	-.220*
Reject one-man rule Strongly disapprove (1); disapprove (2); Neither approve nor disapprove (3); approve (4); Strongly approve (5)	Internet	-.016	-.042	-.049	-.048
	Social Media	-.034	-.037	-.016	.141
	IntSoc	-.020	-.049	-.038	.028
Reject Apartheid Strongly disapprove (1); disapprove (2); Neither approve nor disapprove (3); approve (4); Strongly approve (5)	Internet	-.012	.105	-.136*	.013
	Social Media	.014	.065	-.161**	.171
	IntSoc	.003	.092	-.164**	.076

Table 11: Correlation table for Internet and social media use and IntSoc scale and preference for different kinds of government based on race

Table 13 displays the bivariate relationship between Internet and social media use and support for authoritarian regimes and for democracy. Very few noteworthy correlations appear for race group. What can be taken away from the table is that, based on the negative correlation for military rule and Internet use, the more Indian respondents use the Internet, the more likely they are to reject military rule. Similarly, there is a negative correlation between all three independent variables and rejection of apartheid for coloured respondents. The more time this group spends on the Internet and social media, the less likely they are to approve of apartheid.

Therefore, there is some support for H8 in terms of race. We find a rejection of apartheid among coloured respondents and rejection of military rule among Indian respondents, who frequently go online. However, there are no other significant correlations that could lead us to make the final conclusion that Internet and social media use increase support for democracy in South Africa.

4.5.5 Hypothesis 9

Correlations for measures of political behaviour based on age

		18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
Member of religious group Not a member (0); Inactive Member (1); Active member (2); Official leader (3)	Internet	.114*	.181**	.120**	.026	-.016
	Social Media	.023	.151**	.133**	.043	-.056
	IntSoc	.082	.182**	.139**	.016	-.015
Member of voluntary association Not a member (0); Inactive Member (1); Active member (2); Official leader (3)	Internet	.021	.175**	.115**	-.045	-.018
	Social Media	.057	.155**	.149**	-.045	-.014
	IntSoc	.030	.182**	.134**	-.065	-.025

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Attend a community meeting Would never do this (0); Would if had the chance (1); Once or twice (2); Several times (3); Often (4)	Internet	.027	-.039	.044	-.080	-.121*
	Social Media	.039	-.058	.033	-.118*	-.091*
	IntSoc	.035	-.048	.035	-.113*	-.118*
Join others to raise an issue Would never do this (0); Would if had the chance (1); Once or twice (2); Several times (3); Often (4)	Internet	-.003	-.055	.024	-.028	-.127**
	Social Media	.072	-.040	.038	-.061	-.137**
	IntSoc	.044	-.047	.032	-.050	-.123*
Attend a campaign rally No (0); Yes (1)	Internet	-.050	.006	.032	-.095*	-.046
	Social Media	-.025	.050	.078*	-.031	-.017
	IntSoc	-.025	.034	.054	-.073	-.044
Attend a campaign meeting No (0); Yes (1)	Internet	-.052	-.028	-.006	-.033	.050
	Social Media	-.017	.010	-.005	-.029	.050
	IntSoc	-.037	-.008	-.009	-.026	.051
Persuade others to vote No (0); Yes (1)	Internet	-.020	.013	.029	-.033	.054
	Social Media	.012	.005	.029	.016	.040
	IntSoc	-.006	.012	.029	-.024	.054
Work for candidate or party No (0); Yes (1)	Internet	-.040	.019	-.006	.053	.107*
	Social Media	.056	-.009	-.001	.095*	.143**
	IntSoc	-.005	.007	-.006	.069	.112*
Contact [51] (Scale) Never (low); Often (high)	Internet	-.045	-.010	.050	-.011	.009
	Social Media	-.077	.003	.087*	.007	.023
	IntSoc	-.060	.002	.068	-.008	.006
Voting Voted (1); Did not vote (2)	Internet	-.004	.011	.002	.132**	-.011
	Social Media	.052	.009	-.031	.117*	.014
	IntSoc	.015	.009	-.008	.148**	-.013
Request government action Would never do this (0); Would if had the chance (1); Once or twice (2); Several times (3); Often (4)	Internet	.070	.092**	.002	-.012	-.008
	Social Media	.060	-.050	.009	.023	.041
	IntSoc	.078	-.074*	.003	.002	.002
Contact media Would never do this (0); Would if had the chance (1); Once or twice (2); Several times (3); Often (4)	Internet	.110*	.053	.033	.077	.141**
	Social Media	.094*	.088*	.108**	.081	.141**
	IntSoc	.112*	.082*	.065	.083	.148**
Contact official for help Would never do this (0); Would if had the chance (1); Once or twice (2); Several times (3); Often (4)	Internet	.138**	.044	.057	-.021	.043
	Social Media	.153**	.070*	.106**	.034	.024
	IntSoc	.155**	.063	.071*	-.001	.046
Attend demonstration or protest Would never do this (0); Would if had the chance (1); Once or twice (2); Several times (3); Often (4)	Internet	-.064	-.080*	-.002	.006	.056
	Social Media	-.027	-.020	.023	.057	.102*
	IntSoc	-.034	-.052	.000	.028	.069

Table 12: Correlation table for Internet and social media use and IntSoc scale and measures of political behaviour based on age

Table 14 displays the bivariate correlation for measures of political behaviour and Internet and social media use based on age. At first glance, we see that going online predominantly affects people aged 25-34 and 35-44 and their group membership. We see moderate, positive correlations between Internet, social media and the IntSoc scale for membership of a religious

[51] For detailed description of the computation of contact as a scale variable, please see chapter 3

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group and membership of a voluntary association or community group. This indicates that the more these groups use the Internet or social media, the more likely they are to be a member of a group.

When it comes to attending a community meeting and joining others to raise an issue, we see negative correlations for 45-54 and 55+-year-olds, indicating that the more they go online, the less likely they are to do either of those things. However, there is a positive correlation between Internet and social media use and working for a candidate or party for those aged 55+. This means that the more they use the Internet and social media, the more likely they are to work for a candidate or party. Internet and social media use only show an effect on voting for people aged 45-54. There is a positive correlation between these variables, indicating that the more time they spend online, the more likely they are to vote.

Furthermore, there is a positive correlation between our independent variables and contacting the media for those aged 55+, showing that Internet and social media use increases their likelihood to contact the media. We see the same effects for the 18-24-year-old cohort and some weak, positive relationships for the 24-35, and 35-44-year old cohorts. There is also a positive, moderate correlation between Internet and social media use and contacting an official for help for people aged 18-24, also showing that Internet and social media use increases their likelihood to contacting an official.

Overall, we find that each group is positively affected by Internet and social media use in terms of political behaviour in one way or another. Apart from the 45-54 and 55+ cohorts, who are negatively affected by going online in terms of their likelihood to attend a community meeting and raising an issue, we see some mobilising effects of Internet and social media use. Therefore, the results show partial support for H9 in terms of age.

Correlations for measures of political behaviour based on race

		Black	White	Coloured	Indian
Member of religious group Not a member (0); Inactive Member (1); Active member (2); Official leader (3)	Internet	.108*	-.045	.268**	.141
	Social Media	.063**	-.035	.231**	.209*
	IntSoc	.091**	-.038	.261**	.197*
Member of voluntary association Not a member (0); Inactive Member (1); Active member (2); Official leader (3)	Internet	.081**	.099	.254**	-.071
	Social Media	.081**	-.049	.253**	.016
	IntSoc	.081**	-.004	.258**	-.043
Attend a community meeting Would never do this (0); Would if had the chance (1); Once or twice (2); Several times (3); Often (4)	Internet	.023	.009	.175**	.234*
	Social Media	-.021	-.127*	.208**	.195*
	IntSoc	.000	-.082	.192**	.260**
	Internet	-.005	-.023	.208**	.202*
	Social Media	-.023	.005	.226**	.097

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Join others to raise an issue Would never do this (0); Would if had the chance (1); Once or twice (2); Several times (3); Often (4)	IntSoc	-.013	-.007	.220**	.193*
Attend a campaign rally No (0); Yes (1)	Internet	.041*	.031	.068	.152
	Social Media	.062**	.019	.122*	.174
	IntSoc	.057**	.016	.091	.164
Attend a campaign meeting No (0); Yes (1)	Internet	.018	-.049	.040	.014
	Social Media	.026	-.198**	.083	.057
	IntSoc	.029	-.165**	.058	.031
Persuade others to vote No (0); Yes (1)	Internet	.043*	-.020	.001	.000
	Social Media	.039	-.094	.015	.000
	IntSoc	.043*	-.093	.002	.000
Work for candidate or party No (0); Yes (1)	Internet	.037	.042	.062	.000
	Social Media	.038	-.040	.073	.000
	IntSoc	.040*	-.033	.065	.000
Contact (Scale) Never (low); Often (high)	Internet	.040*	-.096	.193**	-.208*
	Social Media	.011	-.082	.266**	-.082
	IntSoc	.031	-.127*	.233**	-.167
Voting Voted (1); Did not vote (2)	Internet	.085*	.010	.004	.211*
	Social Media	.108**	.118*	.042	.057
	IntSoc	.105**	.049	.024	.144
Request government action Would never do this (0); Would if had the chance (1); Once or twice (2); Several times (3); Often (4)	Internet	.015	.171**	.188**	.384**
	Social Media	.003	.193**	.174**	.287**
	IntSoc	.012	.183**	.182**	.382**
Contact media Would never do this (0); Would if had the chance (1); Once or twice (2); Several times (3); Often (4)	Internet	.088**	.145*	.197**	.477**
	Social Media	.109**	.166**	.204**	.330**
	IntSoc	.102**	.173**	.217**	.474**
Contact official for help Would never do this (0); Would if had the chance (1); Once or twice (2); Several times (3); Often (4)	Internet	.042*	.164**	.202**	.333**
	Social Media	.042*	.155*	.273**	.217*
	IntSoc	.038	.145*	.245**	.328**
Attend demonstration or protest Would never do this (0); Would if had the chance (1); Once or twice (2); Several times (3); Often (4)	Internet	.061**	.160*	.058	.196*
	Social Media	.083**	.257**	.075	.076
	IntSoc	.075**	.238**	.064	.188*

Table 13: Correlation table for Internet and social media use and IntSoc scale and measures of political behaviour based on race

The first striking thing we can take away from the table is the positive effect of going online on group membership for coloured people, meaning that the more they use the Internet and social media, the more likely they are to join a group. We see the same effects for black respondents to a weaker extent and only social media and the IntSoc scale positively affect Indian membership of religious groups. Furthermore, there is a positive correlation between attending a community meeting and all independent variables for coloured and Indian respondents, and social media use negatively affects the likelihood of white respondents to attend a community meeting.

When it comes to attending a campaign rally, black respondents seem to be affected by all three independent variables, however, the correlations are very weak. White respondents are

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negatively affected by social media use and attending a campaign rally, indicating that the more time they spend on social media, the less likely they are to attend a campaign rally.

On the one hand, going online seems to increase coloured people's likelihood of contacting government officials. On the other hand, Internet use decreases Indian people's likelihood of contacting officials while IntSoc decreases the likelihood of white respondents. Black people appear to be affected the most when it comes to voting. The positive correlations indicate that the more time this race group spends online, the more likely they are to vote, however these relationships are rather weak. Furthermore, reading news on social media seems to increase white people's likelihood of voting while the same appears to be true for Indians and reading political news on the Internet.

The next striking aspect that can be taken away from the table is that Internet and social media use show a moderate correlation between citizen action for white people. We see that the more time white respondents spend online, the more likely they are to request government action, to contact the media, to contact an official for help and to attend a demonstration or protest march. We see similar effects for Indian respondents with partially strong, highly significant correlations. Internet and social media use also positively affects coloured people's likelihood of doing either of those things, except attending a demonstration or protest march. For black people, on the other hand, we see only weak correlations.

In comparison to all other race groups, Indian people seem to be especially affected by Internet and social media to obtain political news or a combination of both. This applies especially to requesting government action, contacting the media and contacting an official for help. This might be related to their higher levels of education relative to black and coloured people for example. However, more research will have to be conducted to determine the full extent of this relationship.

Apart from white people, who become less likely to attend a community and campaign meeting the more they go online, we see that the Internet and social media have a strong mobilising effect on all race groups. This includes group membership, attending community and campaign meetings and rallies, contacting officials and incumbents, voting, requesting government action, contacting the media and officials for help, and attending a demonstration or protest march. Therefore, when it comes to race, there is overall strong support for H9.

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4.6 Interpretation: Research Question 3

Having established the bivariate correlations between the dependent and independent variables, we can now move on to analyse the results to answer our research question and hypotheses. There are two main observations to be made. One, although young people are the most likely to use the Internet and social media, they are the least likely to be influenced by them. Two, although white people are more likely to use the Internet or social media every day, they seem to be least affected by them.

Throughout, we see that particularly people aged 55 and above are consistently affected by Internet and social media use, even though they are the age group which is least likely to go online. Conversely, while the 18-24 age group displays some significant correlations, they tend to be weak. Where this cohort seems to be affected the most is their belief in gender equality, their levels of trust in officials and incumbents, their perceptions of corruption, their rejection of one-man rule and their likelihood to contact the media and to contact an official for help.

Although black respondents most frequently display significant correlations between Internet and social media use and measures of political values, attitudes, and behaviour, they tend to be weak overall. Despite the fact that of all groups, white respondents are the group that uses Internet and social media most frequently, they produce almost no significant correlations in terms of attitudes and values. Yet, their likelihood of requesting government action, contacting the media and officials, and attending a demonstration or protest march increases the more time they spend on the Internet and social media. The two race groups that display the strongest correlations are in fact coloured and Indian respondents. We find moderate to strong correlations for measures of values, attitudes, and behaviour. These findings can be linked back to the digital divide in South Africa and levels of education in the country. According to Statistics South Africa (2016)[52], the black population in South Africa still lags behind in terms of educational attainment, while whites and Indians have the highest proportion of post-secondary level of education while both groups also have the lowest proportion of individuals with the lowest levels of education. The differences in education thus reflect on Internet access and technological literacy. By virtue of their higher levels of education, Indian and white respondents show stronger correlations. However, we also see that coloured respondents show quite a few significant correlations. Reasons for this are not immediately clear and might need

[52] http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/Report%2092-01-03/Report%2092-01-032016.pdf

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some further investigation. Bearing these trends in mind, the following sections aim to provide an interpretation of the most prominent findings and how they relate to the literature.

4.6.1 Hypothesis 5

Earlier, we saw that there are competing theories about media effects on political attitudes. First, the media malaise theory (Cappella and Jamieson, 1997; Mutz & Reeves, 2005) argues that the overall negative coverage on politics generates "cynicism and malaise" and leads to more "negative attitudes toward political institutions" (Chang, 2018:1001). The virtuous circle theory (Aarts & Semetko, 2003; Norris, 2000;2001) on the other hand, claims that enhanced exposure to political information via the media leads to heightened interest in politics and more positive attitudes toward political institutions. Chang (2018) explores the applicability of these two theories on Internet use and other forms of media and finds that people who frequently read the newspaper, listen to the radio and use the Internet for political information are more interested in politics but are less satisfied with democracy.

This study finds support for the virtuous circle theory in relation to interest in politics. The more both demographic groups use the Internet and social media, the more likely they are to be interested in and discuss politics with others. This applies to both, age and race of respondent. Specifically, respondents above the age of 24 show an increase in levels of internal efficacy, which may also be attributable to socialisation and lifecycle effects. In terms of race, black, coloured and Indian respondents show a heightened interest in public affairs and an increase in discussing politics. Therefore, we can say that most age and race groups are part of a virtuous circle through Internet and social media. This raises the question as to whether these findings set Internet and social media apart from traditional mass media such as newspapers, or TV. Further studies will need to investigate whether there are large differences between online media and traditional media and how they affect citizens in South Africa.

4.6.2 Hypothesis 6

Norris (2001:55) argues that cyberspace is dominated by postmaterialist value priorities, where users are more concerned with self-actualization and issues concerning quality of life, self-expression, individual freedom, cosmopolitanism, and participatory democracy. Thereby, postmaterialist values are more likely to spread faster among Internet users than non-users. This seems to be the case in the South African context as well, albeit not as pronounced as it might be in more established democracies. Welzel (2006:871) argues that "democratization is essentially an emancipative process, for it manifests human freedom by empowering people

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with civil and political rights". Such an emancipative process, he argues, leads to mass attitudes of "liberty aspirations" which are more powerful in facilitating progress toward democratization than any other indicators such as GDP or social capital.

There is overall support for measures of emancipative values for both, age and race, however not as pronounced as expected. These rather weak correlations could also tell us another story, which is that South Africans are simply not as influenced by postmaterialist/emancipative values online as people in other democracies might be. It is quite possible that because South Africans tend to value democracy instrumentally rather than intrinsically (Steenekamp, 2017), postmaterialist and emancipative value preferences are not as widely spread despite increasing levels of Internet access in the country.

4.6.3 Hypothesis 7

We have briefly touched on the concept of echo chambers and selective exposure in chapter 1 and the outcome of the analysis lead us to investigate it in more detail. Justwan, Baumgaertner, Carlisle, Clark and Clark (2018) pay particularly close attention to so-called "echo chambers" on social media sites and the way in which they affect users' satisfaction with democracy. Echo chambers online represent "ideologically congruent and homogenous environments" in which political opinions are enforced rather than debated (Justwan, *et al.*, 2018:425). This means that individuals are more likely to engage with groups of people that represent their own point of view, rather than with people that would challenge those views. Due to these reinforcing and "ambivalence-reducing properties", social media echo chambers have the strength to impact satisfaction with democracy; more specifically, they tend to boost satisfaction with democracy among supporters of a victorious party and reduce satisfaction among supporters of a losing party (Justwan, *et al.* 2018:426). This stands in partial contrast to Stoycheff's and Nisbet's (2014) argument about the "window-opening" properties of the Internet, where people who spend more time online are more likely to be dissatisfied with the way democracy works in their country.

Yet, we receive mixed results that relate to levels of satisfaction and levels of trust and perceptions of corruption. If we look at the correlations between Internet and social media use, we find that people who spend more time online have lower levels of trust in officials and believe that most of them are involved in corruption. These findings also contradict our previous results that speak for the virtuous circle theory and instead support the media malaise theory. If anything, people who are satisfied with democracy should be more likely to trust

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government officials, but we find the opposite to be true. Specifically, those aged 18-24 show a simultaneous distrust of politicians and a belief in high levels of corruption. Using mixed methods, Bosch (2013: 124) finds that in a national survey interviewing people aged 15 and 30, there were very low levels of trust in traditional institutions and high levels of perceptions of corruption. However, when conducting focus groups, Bosch (2013) finds that most participants had little understanding of the functionality of these institutions and were unable to name instances of corruption. The quantitative analysis supports Bosch's (2013) findings, however, qualitative insights will provide further insight.

Yet, we see quite high levels of satisfaction with democracy among coloured, Indian and black respondents. Considering the fact that the African National Congress (ANC) enjoys quite a strong support base among South African voters and considering the outcome of the analysis that Internet and social media users tend to be more satisfied with democracy, there is reason to believe that echo chambers are prevalent among South African Internet and social media users.

However, because the correlations for age groups between trust and corruption and Internet and social media use are stronger than the correlation between satisfaction with democracy and social media use, we can conclude that people who go online more frequently to find political news are more distrustful and critical of government officials, supporting Stoycheff and Nisbet's (2014) argument about the "window-opening" properties of the Internet, where people who spend more time online are more likely to be dissatisfied with the way democracy works in their country.

4.6.4 Hypothesis 8

We saw that the analysis of the variables relating to hypothesis 8 (Internet and social media users are more likely to express a preference for democracy over any other form of government) showed mixed results. Although there is a general disapproval of any forms of authoritarian rule, especially among age groups, there is also some support for Apartheid among people aged between 35 and 55+. These represent interesting findings and appear to be controversial, considering South Africa's history with Apartheid. Steenekamp (2017:67) finds that there "appears to have been a value shift" in the country where the "gap between support for democratic rule and authoritarian rule has narrowed". This might explain why some Internet and social media users tend to show some support for Apartheid and why some groups express low levels of support for democracy (Q30). If we link these findings to those of Gouws and

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Schulz-Herzenberg (2017) we could speculate that support for Apartheid and low levels of support for democracy can be attributed to declining levels of diffuse support for democracy. However, other studies will need to be conducted in order to determine the full extent of these relationships.

4.6.5 Hypothesis 9

Jensen (2013:250) believes that group formations and group mobilisations online hold great potential because theoretically, "every person or group can advocate their opinions or ideas to a potentially unlimited audience". Schlozman *et al.* (2010:490) agree by claiming that the Internet reduces "almost to zero the additional costs of seeking to organize" groups, no matter their nature (e.g. political, religious, scientific,). This does not only include online groups but also offline groups. An Internet user who seeks to join a community or group of their interest may simply search for related information online and be presented with a wide array of possible options that would fit their interest. Many organisations post their information and contact details online by creating their own websites, thereby allowing potential new members to locate and contact them easily. We also find support for these claims in this study. People who go online more frequently, tend to be more involved in religious groups or voluntary associations and to attend community meetings. This may be because their ease of accessing information that relates to such activities is made significantly easier through the Internet.

Bosch (2010: 270) points out that networking sites such as Facebook are increasingly being used to recruit members. *Amandla! People's Media's* Facebook group, for example, directs members to "its print publications, radio and TV items and events" while the *Social Justice Coalition* Facebook group invites online members to events and addresses issues around which their campaigns run to raise awareness. In a different study, Bosch (2013: 127) shows that a number of focus group participants use Facebook to "engage with religious interest groups" and that "religion often became a proxy for a sense of community and civic identity". Her findings apply in this study as well, particularly to the 25-34 and 35-44 age groups and coloured respondents.

When it comes to certain political activities, many scholars have found that online and offline forms of participation or engagement complement each other or even have equivalents. Anduiza *et al.* (2009:862)[53] for example, find that contacting government officials or the media, can be done through many mediums, ranging from telephone, letter, or email, the latter of

[53] See also Tolbert & McNeal (2010) and Sylvester & McGlynn (2010)

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which presents itself with the lowest cost or effort. In this research study, we also find some significant associations and correlations between contacting officials and the media, showing that users are more likely to do so than non-users. Therefore, we can assume that Internet and social media users take advantage of these mediums by tweeting at or emailing news agencies or politicians.

Similar trends hold true for citizen mobilisation online; Kim (2006:40) finds that the rise of the Internet coincided with a rise of demonstrations and protest activities in South Korea. This trend can be attributed to the new opportunities provided to citizen empowerment through the web. The perhaps most popular example that highlights the relationship between social media and protests is the Arab uprising in late 2010. Tufekci and Wilson (2012:369) find that people who participated in the protests, mostly learned about it through a "certain type of media use" and that social media use significantly increased their likelihood of attending protests. We also find more recent cases that highlight the power of the Internet and social media to mobilise. These examples include Sudan, which blocked social media "amid growing calls for its long-time president to step down" (News24, 2010)[54], and Zimbabwe and the DRC which cut the Internet connection in their countries in response to civilian unrest related to political dissatisfaction. In the South African context, we also find support for the relationship between Internet and social media use and attending a demonstration or protest, especially among students who mobilised online to protest an increase in student fees and to advocate for the removal of Afrikaans as a tuition language at the Stellenbosch University. Therefore, our findings regarding the positive correlation between social media use and participating in a demonstration or protest march and joining others to raise an issue, represent plausible outcomes that are reflected in past events and the existing literature.

4.7 Summary of findings

This section serves to summarise the findings of the quantitative analysis to provide an overview of the most significant relationships between using the Internet and social media to source political news.

4.7.1 Demographic findings

Internet and social media users tend to

[54] https://www.news24.com/Africa/News/explainer-109-a-busy-year-for-african-internet-shutdowns-20190121

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- Be younger, more educated, white and Indian and live in urban areas

4.7.2 Political Attitudes

- Internet and social media seem to increase interest in public affairs and likelihood of discussing politics among 25-34, 35-44 and 55+-year olds as well as black, coloured and Indian respondents
- There are somewhat weak correlations between Internet and social media use and support for gender equality in terms of leadership among 18-24-year olds
- The more time they spend online, the more 55+-year olds and Indian respondents tend to disagree that government should be able to ban any organization that goes against its policies
- Indian respondents also believe that the media should have the right to publish any views without government control the more they read political news online
- Overall, Indian respondents appear to be positively affected the most by Internet and social media use when it comes to emancipative values
- Increased use of the Internet and social media seems to erode trust in politicians and increase perceptions of corruption among 18-24-year olds. This also holds for black respondents
- Internet and social media use negatively affects levels of trust for those aged 55+ and it increases the likelihood of 25-34-year olds to believe that officials and institutions are involved in corruption
- The more time white respondents spend browsing the Internet and social media for political news, the more likely they are to believe that South Africa is a full democracy; yet the more time Indian respondents spend on the Internet, the less likely they are to believe that South Africa is a full democracy
- Internet and social media use increase the likelihood of 45-54- and 55+-year olds to reject one-party rule
- Yet, it also increases the likelihood of those aged 35-44; 45-54 and 55+ to approve of Apartheid
- The more time Indian and coloured respondents spend on the Internet and social media, the more likely they are to disapprove of military rule and Apartheid, respectively

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Political Behaviour

- Internet and social media use increase the likelihood of those aged 25-34 and 35-44 to be a member of a religious group or voluntary association
- This also holds for coloured and Indian respondents. They are also more likely to attend a community meeting and joining others to raise an issue
- Internet and social media use increase the likelihood of those age 55 and above to work for a candidate or party and it also increases the likelihood of those aged 45-54 to vote
- Coloured respondents are more likely to contact an official or institution the more time they spend online and black, white and Indian respondents become more likely to vote the more time they spend online
- All race groups become more likely to either request government action, contacting the media or an official for help. This correlation is especially strong for Indian respondents relative to all other race groups
- Internet and social media use also appears to positively affect 18-24-year olds in terms of contacting the media and officials; this also applies to those aged 55 and above in terms of contacting the media
- Lastly, white respondents appear to be affected the most when it comes to Internet and social media use and their likelihood attending a demonstration or protest. Indian respondents also seem to be positively affected

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter has given a detailed analysis of the relationship between the Internet and social media and political attitudes and behaviour. Overall, we find that Internet and social media use is mainly determined by age, education and race of respondent. Those who live in urban areas are also more likely to use the Internet and social media to source political news. The findings in the quantitative analysis allow us to answer RQ_2 – *Is there a measurable difference between Internet and social media users versus non-users in terms of their political attitudes and their behaviour?* – with an indecisive 'no'. While there are some significant correlations between using the Internet and social media to source political news and political attitudes and behaviour, they are not particularly strong.

However, exploring relationships for different age and race groups appears to be a solution in terms of establishing whether online media has impacted different groups' poltical attitudes

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and behaviour. Indeed, we find some significant correlations for all groups, regardless of age and race. Interestingly, the 55+ age group seems to consistently show significant correlations, indicating that this cohort is affected most by online political news media. Indian and coloured respondents also show the strongest correlations compared to other race groups. It was expected that this would hold for white and Indian respondents, considering that these cohorts are the most likely to have access to the Internet, given the digital divide in South Africa. Nevertheless, the findings presented above allow us to answer RQ_3 - *Are there measurable differences between Internet and social media users versus non-users in terms of their political attitudes and behaviour based on age and race?* - with yes, there are measurable differences. However, given the low penetration rate of the Internet in South Africa compared to more advanced democracies, these relationships are weak to moderate in strength. Future studies will have to be conducted to monitor the longitudinal effects of Internet and social media use for political news on South Africans.

Furthermore, we do not know what causes these relationships and we also do not know the direction of such relationships. For example, does Internet and social media use increase the likelihood of people to be interested in public affairs or are those who are interested in public affairs more likely to read their political news online? The qualitative analysis in Chapter 5 will hopefully shed some more light on unexplored relationships between the Internet and politics.

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Chapter 5: Qualitative Analysis

5.1 Introduction

The following chapter provides an overview of the focus group discussion that served as an additional source of data for the overall study. First, the reader is reminded of why focus groups are considered a suitable methodology to explore the research question, apart from the quantitative measure and the value of focus groups is briefly discussed. Thereafter, the focus group procedure is laid out, which involves the discussion procedure as well as the transcription process. The main section deals with the overall findings of the focus group discussion and is structured according to the most prominent themes that arose during the discussion as opposed to the discussion protocol. These themes are the use of social media and the Internet as a source of political information, social media, trust and perceptions of politicians, social media, democracy and selective exposure and finally social media and online hierarchies. Following this, the reader is provided with a summary of findings to provide an overview of the most dominant ideas and themes that arose during the focus group. Finally, a brief account of the researcher's focus group experience is provided, containing positive experiences and difficulties and how they were overcome.

5.2 Why Focus Groups?

In chapter 3 we looked at the different kinds of mixed methods research, those being convergent, additional and sequential coverage. It was mentioned that this study makes use of a mix of additional and sequential coverage. It makes use of additional coverage because "different methods (are assigned) to different purposes" so that the project can "pursue a wider range of research goals". The research goals in the quantitative section are to determine relationships between using the Internet and social media to source political news, and political attitudes and behaviour. The research goals of the qualitative section on the other hand, seek to determine what may cause these relationships. Sequential contributions use the "results of one method to enhance the effectiveness of another" (Morgan, 2014: 11). Applying this logic to the research study at hand, we use the results of the quantitative measures to formulate questions for focus group discussions. We need to know what exactly it is we need to ask participants if we wish to make any meaningful findings.

It was mentioned earlier that previous research on the relationship between the Internet and political behaviour predominantly relies on quantitative measures that explore that *what* in the

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relationships between predetermined variables. This limits researchers' findings as they are confined to use strictly defined variables in surveys instead of exploring the possibility of the existence of other important variables. We hope to overcome this gap through the qualitative method employed in this research study that seeks to explore the *how* and the *why*. More specifically, how do young university students engage with political information online? What are their motivations to be politically engaged online? Why is the web more appealing to them than conventional news media?

5.3 The value of Focus Groups

Litosseliti (2003:1) defines focus groups as a "carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment". Focus groups serve to explore specific topics and participants' views, attitudes and experience relating to that topic through group interaction. Because they represent a more natural environment based on conversation flow and exchange, they offer some advantages over methods such as interviews and participant observation. Just like in real life, members of the group discussion are likely to influence and be influenced by others. Therefore, the emphasis of focus groups rests primarily on the interaction among individuals. What makes this so unique and valuable is that this might allow the researcher to "uncover new, open-ended pathways for discussion" through minimal intervention (Litosseliti, 2003:3,5).

Most importantly, while focus groups should follow a set line of questions, they do allow for flexibility. This means that the moderator does not need to follow a strict questionnaire as is often the case in formal interviews but can deviate somewhat from the prescribed questions if an interesting topic should arise (Litosseliti, 2003:17). Therefore, the flexibility of focus groups allow researchers to elaborate on certain points that seem to be important while at the same time, consider other aspects that the researcher has previously not thought of.

5.4 Focus Group Process

5.4.1 Discussion Procedure

The venue that was chosen to conduct the focus group in was the lecture room were participants' honours classes take place. Therefore, they were familiar with their surroundings and possibly more relaxed and open. The room itself is nicely lit through the windows at the back and contained a long table where all participants found seating. The seating arrangement

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turned out to be quite beneficial for the discussion because everyone could see each other by sitting around the table.

Once everyone was seated, the research objectives were presented to all participants, their role in the study was explained and their anonymity in the final publication guaranteed[55]. Participants were also reminded not to disclose any information with outsiders that they would deem as hurtful to other participants. Furthermore, everyone present was asked to sign a consent form relating to the points mentioned above. Thereafter, few introductory exercises were performed such as asking participants to tell everyone a bit about themselves and their own research project. Due to the fact that participants attended the same class, they were all familiar with one another and therefore name tags were not necessary.

Thereafter, the discussion was initiated by asking transition questions in order to get a feeling of everyone's engagement with the Internet and social media. Once it was established that all participants have access to the Internet outside of university and that everyone has a social media account, the discussion continued to address the key aspects of the study. Throughout, all participants conducted themselves in a pleasant and respectful manner, were polite and let everyone finish speaking before they made their contributions. Although some respondents had to be asked to keep their answers short to avoid their domination of the discussion, no one had to be asked to leave, felt uncomfortable or left out of their own free will.

5.4.2 Transcription

The first step that needs to be taken in the analysis of focus group discussions is the transcription. During this process, video or tape recordings are replayed and each respondent's contribution is written out in full. During this process, it is possible that the transcriber may have to pick up "incomplete sentences, half-finished thoughts, parts of words, odd phrases" and other features that come through face to face discussions (Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook, 2007: 111). While it may be quite easy for someone listening to understand these incomplete phrases or thoughts, they can be difficult to follow once written out. Some editing might be required to fill gaps in the spoken word however, it is important that the essence of the respondents' comments remain.

[55] All names mentioned in this study are marked by an asterisk (*), indicating that the names were replaced by pseudonyms. As mentioned in chapter 3, all participants were asked to sign a consent form which also reassured them that their real names will not be used in the final interpretation of the research.

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While transcripts reflect the content of the discussion, they may at times fail to convey the character of the discussion; that is the tone of respondents, nonverbal communication, and gestures that can significantly alter the entire message of a comment and therefore its interpretation. For this reason, the moderator may add further observational data to the transcript such as non-verbal cues that might give further insight to the interpretation of the message (Stewart, *et al.*, 2007: 111).

The transcription of the focus group discussion for this research also required some alterations and editing. This included grammar, incomplete sentences and odd wording. It should be noted that these alterations were simply made for the purpose of an improved reading experience and a high value was placed on ensuring that the meaning and essence of a comment did not go lost in the process of editing it.

Due to the distinct dynamic of each focus group discussion, participants may find certain topics more appealing or more interesting than other topics. In some cases, a participant may bring up an entirely new point of view that the moderator wants to know more about and encourage people to elaborate on that view. For this reason, the moderator may wish to terminate some topics or expand others or even introduce completely new questions that fit the overall discussion (Stewart, *et al.*, 2007: 113).

This has been the case with this study's focus groups as well. Although close attention was paid to follow the overall guiding questions, there were some variations to adapt to comments some participants made. In some cases, respondents were asked to elaborate on some of the points they have raised which encouraged other participants to add comments. Litosseliti (2003: 92) notes that throughout the analysis and transcription process, certain trends and patterns arise. While the researcher may ask specific questions, participants tend to fall back on previous comments or bring up reoccurring themes that are important to them. While the group discussion closely followed a given set of questions, one building upon another, the findings are mostly guided by general themes that arose during the discussion.

5.5 Findings

The questions that were asked during the discussion were based on the quantitative findings of this research. We saw that the most significant findings related to young people's use of the Internet and social media to source political news. Therefore, we might want to find out what makes online news so appealing to young people. Furthermore, we found significant

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correlations between going online and levels of trust and perceptions of corruption. Here, it seems like specifically the 18-24-years old cohort showed consistent correlations. Hence, we want to find out what it is about social media and the Internet that makes them trust politicians and institutions less. Additionally, there were some significant correlations relating the rejection of authoritarian regimes, so we might assume that this cohort supports democratic rule. As such, we look at what their opinions are relating to the beneficial (or detrimental) influence of the Internet and social media on democracy. In the same vein, some respondents brought up the issue of selective exposure, something we cannot measure through quantitative methods. It thus gives some useful insight to the content this cohort exposes itself online.

5.5.1 Social Media and the Internet as a Source of Political News

At the beginning of the discussion, all participants were asked where they primarily get their political news from and all participants agreed that their primary source is social media. While the Internet is used on occasion to verify information, participants did not admit to actively going on the Internet to search for political news. As Jemma* put it,

> "I think online is better. Because when things pop up you go ahead and read it. But in my free time I won't go and turn on the radio."

Other participants also remarked that they prefer the Internet and social media to find political news because they feel less "controlled" and "politically aligned". This has to do with the fact that participants believed that news that are covered in conventional sources need to undergo a screening process by government institutions which decides whether these news are appropriate for publication. Yet, participants seemed to be aware of the dangers that news articles pose online. Some pointed out that fake news is a real threat that one needs to watch out for and others claimed to make active attempts at debunking certain information that is shared online. On the other hand, some participants asserted that they used mobile news apps such as News24, Eyewitness News or BBC News. However, they also said that they mostly just looked at the first few headlines of notifications on their devices and only read articles that spark real interest. Therefore, a lot of important political information may go unnoticed to readers if the headlines do not speak to them. Others mentioned the diversity of information online. Lucas* for example, finds that

> "… you cannot really control what you are hoping to learn. You know if you google something you can get straight to the point. If I want to know about a certain issue I'm not just going to sit and wait until it pops up on TV or the radio."

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Social media also seems to be a tool for participants to inform themselves about politicians and parties. Jemma* pointed out that it is much easier to go on someone's Twitter account and read up on their policies, rather than spending too much time going on their website and reading their manifesto. Therefore, social media is used as a time-efficient, easy to navigate tool to source information. Chris* said that,

> "I personally don't just go on google to find out something about someone; I tend to go on social media to get informed. For example, with political parties you can usually see immediately what they stand for. And as opposed to reading long manifestos on their websites, I can just build my own opinion at one glance at their social media account."

Most political parties and candidates who have a social media account inform their followers about what they stand for and what their ideals and objectives are. Therefore, it appears that participants prefer to use politically related social media accounts as a shortcut to get informed as opposed to reading long manifestos. Even though this might appear to be an effective and time-efficient method to get informed, there may be some negative implications associated with this.

One of such implications is that simple Twitter posts for example, only allow a text to be 280 characters long and therefore, posts are extremely simplified and often cannot bring across an entire message. Furthermore, most party social media accounts only provide a brief snapshot of what they stand for and what their agendas are and as a result, a lot of information about parties or incumbents may be lost or even misinterpreted by readers. Although party manifestos, constitutions or agendas can span several pages, they do not only provide a snapshot of those parties but often go into depth about how certain changes, policies or agendas are to be achieved, an integral part of what constitutes politics.

This finding also supports the claim that voters are "cognitive misers" who search for "informational cues and mental shortcuts" in order to reach a voting decision (Gunther, Beck & Nisbet, 2019:1). In-so-doing, voters tend to pay, and are also more likely to be influenced more attention to negative information as opposed to positive information (see also Lau, 1982; Zaller, 1992; Redlawsk, 2004).

5.5.2 Social Media, Trust, and Politicians

A general reoccurring theme throughout the discussion was the relationship between social media and politicians' image. What became quite clear was that participants placed high value on politicians' integrity based on their social lives. When asked whether the Internet and social

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media have made them more critical and distrusting of politicians, there was a general agreement among participants. Grace* found that there has always been distrust toward politicians in the past, however the rise of social media has amplified that distrust and now reassures her to "be right to distrust them". Sarah* mentioned that even though an official might have done something wrong that could cloud her perception of him or her, she still believes that "the basic quality of honesty should be there" for her. When an incumbent has done "something wrong", she believes that "their being honest about it instead of denying the obvious", heightens her perception of them.

Furthermore, integrity and honesty in politicians seemed to be a determining factor for respondents when it comes to supporting them and whether they would be seen as fit for office. James* pointed out that

> "If you are able to hurt the people closest to you, I don't expect you to have compassion or empathy for the people as a whole. So, your character in your personal life shows me what you are capable of and your ability to look after the population. Because I don't want someone that is vindictive. If they are going to be in power, they are going to have to be close to perfect if I am going to trust them at all."

There also seems to be some sense of immediacy when it comes to politicians and their performance. Although most participants agreed that most if not all politicians are corrupt and not trustworthy, there was some value placed on their competence and their ability to perform well in office. Olivia* for example, said that

> "In politics, we are never going to find anyone that is perfect, so we choose the better devil. So, I think it is based on who is going to give me what I need the quickest or who is nearer to bringing me closer to the goal that I want to achieve for my country and myself as well."

This indicates that there is a need for immediacy of achieving goals in order for participants to support incumbents. Whoever can bring desired change the fastest way is seen as a right fit for office. Others such as Mary* believed that people place too much value on politicians' personal life than their ability to run the country.

> "Looking at a politician's personal life seems to shape people's opinions on him dramatically when he's a cheater or a sexist. And to me that doesn't mean that he is a bad politician. I mean, what does his personal life have to do with his job? I just think that people focus too much on these things instead of on what he is meant to do which is run the country."

Yet, despite social media's ability to uncover cases of corruption and misbehaviour of politicians, Jane* felt like it has also empowered politicians and took away power from traditional, reputable news media. She said that,

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> "It's interesting how it allows them to control the narrative. For example, when a news story breaks on a Thursday and the paper only comes out on a Sunday, they can tweak the information before you can even form an opinion before there is even news cover it."

Indeed, many politicians are often quick to resort to social media to make their stances known to the public. Political figures such as US President Donald Trump, EFF leader Julius Malema or ANC leader and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa are known to update their Twitter statuses on a regular basis to provide a direct link to the general population. However, this statement somewhat contradicts previous statements about conventional news being controlled and "politically aligned". Statements made by politicians online are bound to be politically aligned and to follow an agenda of gaining more support. Therefore, it appears that participants seem to think that any form of news or political information they come across are in some way controlled and do not provide all necessary details.

An interesting point raised by Jemma* was that the constant posting of information online and "all that noise" make her "not want to vote anymore". Upon this, a probing question was asked, "do you believe that social media has the potential to dissuade you from voting?". Most participants agreed and said that they though that it "has the potential for that". Jemma* summarised it quite clearly,

> "You see all these political parties and politicians posting online, one flaming the other and saying how bad they all are. And at the same time, I just think to myself that none are better than the other. They are all corrupt and dishonest in one way or another. So, who am I going to vote for? I feel like sometimes there isn't even a real choice."

Lucas* added to the aspect of social media and politics that,

> "It is not a one-way street. Of course, you have that aspect of increased level of sharing of ideas. But I think it is a tool that can inhibit a desire to be politically active due to the nature in which politics is discussed and conducted."

In this regard, we may find some support for the media malaise theory which states that coverage of politics as "horse-race" can lead to lower levels of trust and cynicism (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Robinson, 1976; Heywood, 2013:185). Indeed, participants did display low levels of trust and cynicism toward politicians and politics as a whole. This agreement highlights the quantitative findings of this study were particularly respondents aged 18-24-years old had low levels of trust in politicians and institutions and believed that most of them are involved in corruption. It appears that regardless of the source which covers political news, respondents naturally hold negative attitudes toward incumbents and regular coverage on cases of corruption or even personal scandals reinforces their beliefs that politicians are not to be trusted.

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5.5.3 Social Media, Democracy and Selective Exposure

A central theme to the discussion was the relationship between social media and democracy. When asked whether participants believed that social media and the Internet have the potential to improve democracy, Emily* said,

> "I definitely think so. I think social media creates a space for people to have easy access to knowledge but also engage with it and form their own opinions. It creates a platform of accountability, for example if something starts to trend on Twitter and maybe that politician who is involved can be held accountable."

Some felt like the potential of social media is that it creates exposure and therefore increases involvement in other activities that relate to politics. For example, seeing a party's agenda on their social media account provides them with immediate knowledge about that party which they can in turn use to inform and influence family and peers about voting choices.

Yet, others believed that social media can give a "false representation of how politically involved someone is". Because of the ease of sharing information on such platforms, there might be an overestimation of political involvement of users. James* finds that social media can be more polarising in some respects. He justifies this by claiming that,

> "(…) if we think about how algorithms dictate what we get to see and the opinions we see. So, you get a perception that everyone is kind of the same but due to these algorithms, we do not necessarily get to see many other aspects."

Indeed, the group discussions suggest that most participants are subject to selective exposure and online echo chambers. When asked whether they sometimes expose themselves to content online that does not reflect or complement their own beliefs and opinions, participants generally admitted to doing so. Sarah* mentioned that while she does find herself unfollowing people that do not share her own views, she knows that she is not exposing herself to different points of views.

> "I think the world is better when you just hear the news you want to hear. When I look at Facebook news that I don't want to hear I get angry and I get frustrated, so I find myself deleting my Facebook friends that I don't agree with. And now I think to myself don't do it; you have to be exposed to it. And you see it on Twitter as well. Do I follow people I don't agree with? No! And I think a lot of people feel the same way, especially when they are not taught to think critically."

On the other hand, some participants felt like there is no way around seeing content online that they do not support or do not agree with. Because they are connected to so many people, they are bound to be exposed to opinions that are not their own. Furthermore, participants also seem to follow politicians on Twitter not for the sake of support but rather amusement. One

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participant admitted to following US President Trump because he "sounds like a little boy throwing a tantrum" which is sometimes "quite entertaining". Hannah* said that when it comes to South African politics, she tries to follow all relevant parties not because she likes or supports them, but because she wants to see what they have to say. She added,

> "What I find in South Africa is that there are a lot of fear inducing pages that are really racist that create this conversation that South Africa has a genocide. Now I am weary of people who come into my space and like this stuff. For example, if I see someone that I feel neutral about post something that I do not agree with, my perception of that person tends to change completely, and I start to dislike them and unfollow them."

Therefore, there is reason to assume that participants tend to expose themselves to reinforcing social environments that agree with their point of views. Davis (2017: 280) explains that the reason for residing in echo chambers is because agreeing with someone else and have that person agree with us, is a satisfying experience and thereby prevents people from critically assessing the things they see online. As referred to in Chapter 2, this "groupthink" can eventually lead to a "sense of tribalism" and identity politics and therefore all "social reinforcement" works in favour of our already existing attitudes and beliefs (Davis, 2017: 149). Therefore, finding that most participants do not expose themselves to opposing viewpoints may have negative implications in the sense that identity and group politics might be strengthened by social media. Yet, we cannot make generalisations about the entire population based on these findings however, the global literature suggests that selective exposure is prevalent among most Internet and social media users.

5.5.4 Social Media and Online Hierarchies

The ending question "what is your most favourite and least favourite thing about social media" which was intended to conclude the topic, brought up a range of new avenues to explore. Initially, respondents only gave short ended questions such as "It's endless", "It's fast and it allows me to stay informed and connected with my friends" and "I love the videos". However, Sarah's* comment sparked off a new conversation.

> "The fact that much of the internet is uncensored. If someone tweets something they have just witnessed, then I get that raw information instead of waiting for the filtered coverage by newspapers."

Upon this, several participants responded that it also depends on who provides that raw material. Lucas* said that

> "It really depends on who is posting updates on Twitter for example, because you see that some people really dominate the Twittesphere and have different agendas and intentions."

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When asked to elaborate, he continued that there are different factions on Twitter.

> "You have all these different kinds of Twitter sections. You get black Twitter, feminist Twitter, right Twitter, left Twitter, trans Twitter, music Twitter, or political Twitter. And each section has some sort of thought leaders that dictate what the new trend is that everyone should follow."

Thinking back to previous arguments in the literature which stated that online, the content creator and the content consumer "merge" in the absence of hierarchies (Yildiz, 2002), a probing question was asked. "So, would you say that there is some sort of hierarchy on social media where, whenever an online influencer 'calls the shots', everyone follows?". This sparked overall agreement in the room with participants nodding, murmuring and responding with "yes, definitely". James added*,

> "I think that is one of my least favourite things on social media. I mean everyone has different interests and ideas and beliefs so everyone has a different kind of attitude to certain things. But it feels like sometimes things are brought up that are not in your immediate interest and if you don't jump on that bandwagon, you can be singled out. I mean it's easier to point fingers at someone online than in person and it's easier to start a fight or argument in the comment section. So, it can get really toxic really quickly if you don't know how to distance yourself from certain topics that are sensitive."

It appears that some respondents are experiencing a kind of love-hate relationship with social media. On the one hand, social media allows for an immediate consumption of information, news and updates and on the other, there are certain trends that need to be followed online in order to maintain one's status. Mark* added, "I think we have to make a distinction here based on who people are and what is an opinion. Because there is bigotry and then there is an opinion." When asked to elaborate, he continued,

> "Well I really think it depends on who those so-called influencers are because some of them have valid opinions and others have somehow made it to the top of social media with millions of followers who are susceptible to any kind of news they see online. Doesn't matter if it is backed by evidence or not. So, I think it is becoming increasingly important to maintain a critical approach to everything you see online because with the spread of fake news you can't take anything at face value anymore."

This leads us to assume that some participants are weary of the content they see online and how they let it affect their values and attitudes. It is indeed a positive finding considering the spread of fake news online and hateful speech that is prevalent in chat rooms and comment sections. Yet, it must be kept in mind that this caution of online content might only be limited to educated individuals who have acquired critical thinking skills. The almost endless capacity of online information naturally takes on positive and negative aspects. On the one hand, the Internet facilitates the spread of information and allows its users to inform themselves on

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important topics. On the other hand, there is a vast amount of hate speech and false information that seeks to create divisions within society and lead to conflict.

5.6 Summary of findings

The findings of the focus group discussion overall support and confirm the quantitative findings of this research study. Although no generalisations can be made concerning the entire population, we can draw some parallels.

- Participants prefer to obtain their political news from social media. Some of them use the Internet to verify information that they come across on Twitter or Facebook, however they are more likely to resort to being informed on social networking sites.
- Some participants make use of news apps, however only to the extent that they browse through the headlines and only read those articles that spark real interest.
- The reason why online political news are preferred over conventional news sources is because the Internet allows them to search for any information about which they wish to find out more.
- It appears that social media and online political news has made participants more critical and distrustful of politicians. They seem to believe that social media gives them a justification for being distrustful of them because incumbents are exposed more easily.
- This also seems to transcend a personal level. If an incumbent is seen as unlikable or has a negative personal history, participants are less likely to support him or her. While some respondents agreed to this statement, others expressed that their personal life does not matter to them if they do their job right. However, this only seemed to be a minority.
- The sheer amount online and the partial negative content relating to politicians and political parties seems to discourage some respondents from voting.
- Participants generally believe that the Internet and social media have the potential to improve democracy by providing more information to the public but are also weary of the information they see online.
- Participants seem to be subject to selective exposure, where they prefer to only expose themselves to information, ideas and beliefs that resonate with their own. The personal image of someone else also seems to be easily influenced by the way they conduct themselves online.

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- Some respondents seem to have a kind of love-hate relationship online. On the one hand, they enjoy many aspects of social media and the Internet. On the other, they dislike the fact that some thought leaders dictate what is trending.

5.7 The Focus Group Experience

The perhaps most challenging aspect of the focus group discussion was the recruitment of participants. The initial aim of the study was to conduct at least three focus groups with Stellenbosch University students. However, this proved to be exceptionally difficult. The first obstacle was to find suitable gatekeepers such as heads of departments at the university that would pass on the information to students. Not all people that were contacted responded to emails and even personal visits did not turn out to be successful. Those who were contacted and did respond, indicated that they passed the relevant information on to students. Yet, none came forward to participate in the focus groups, not even given the possibility of winning a cash prize.

The ones that did agree to participate, were political science and international relations honours students to whom I had direct contact and a personal relationship. The group discussion with these students was a pleasant experience. All participants were happy to engage in the discussion and appeared to be genuinely interested and motivated to make their contributions to the study. In some instances, I had to step in to make sure that everyone would get a turn to speak and share their experiences. All participants conducted themselves in a wonderfully respectful and considerate manner, letting others finish their sentences, raising their hands when they had a contribution to make and politely agreed or disagreed. In no instance did the discussion become negatively heated or hateful.

To record the discussion, I used both a voice recorder and a camera recorder. However, the latter turned out to be somewhat unhelpful because it did not have enough storage space to record the entire discussion which lasted 1 hour and 15 minutes. For this reason, the voice recordings were used as a primary means of collecting data and turned out to be surprisingly simple to navigate. Voices were clear and it was easy to determine which participant made which contribution.

Another challenging aspect concerning the focus group was to distance myself from the general discussion and to only function as an observer and convener and not as a participant. Having grown up in the age of social media, I could relate to many things that were said during the

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discussion and in some instances, I felt the urge to also share my experiences and comments. This was also the case because some things that were said did not resonate with my own personal experience or feelings and I often felt like expressing my own thoughts on the topic. Yet, I constantly had to remind myself of my role during the discussion and refrain from making personal comments. Even though this was a difficult task to overcome, I decided to channel the urge to share my own thoughts through asking probing questions that would bring me closer to the content that I was truly interested in. I believe that in the end, I did manage to distance myself from the overall discussion and remain within my role as a convener.

Overall, the focus group planning procedure and the actual discussion was a wonderful learning experience. I quickly came to realise that finding a gatekeeper was more difficult than anticipated and that distancing myself from the overall topic was a challenging task. However, I enjoyed the overall procedure and was pleasantly surprised by how students engaged with the topic at hand. In hindsight, I might have done things differently such as planning the focus groups more in advance to ensure that enough data can be captured. I would also have asked a more experienced convener to aid me in the discussion or to prepare me for what was lying ahead of me. However, in the end, the experience I have gained is irreplaceable.

5.8 Conclusion

The focus group discussion served to enrich the outcome of the overall study in several aspects. It gave some insight into why young people tend to prefer online political news over conventional news, the primary reason being that the content is not restricted, and participants can read up on anything that they wish to know more about. Furthermore, social media appears to have made participants more distrustful of politicians because it exposes political scandals more quickly and therefore adds to and enforces the reservoir of existing negative opinions about them. Furthermore, incumbents' personal life seems to be of a high importance to participants, due to the belief that if someone does not treat those around him or her well, then they might not treat citizens well either. There is overall consensus that the Internet and social media have the potential to improve democracy and democratic outcomes through the spread of information. However, at the same time, participants appear to be prone to selective exposure which has the potential to enhance identity politics and alienation from different points of view, an aspect that can have a detrimental impact on democracy. Lastly, participants seem to have mixed views about social media. On the one hand, they enjoy the possibilities it offers and on the other, they dislike its polarising properties and the need to follow online influencers.

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Future research needs to be conducted in order to find out more about aspects of trust, selective exposure and online hierarchies to determine the exact impact they might have on young people. However, it is believed that the discussion marked an important step in the South African context by providing researchers with a point of reference of relevant topics.

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Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 of this research study begins by setting out the importance of news media in a fully functioning democracy and introduces the concept of Internet and social media as possible influencers on political attitudes, behaviour and outcomes. This influence, however, only holds when the Internet is expressly used to source political information, therefore the level of measurement of Internet and social media use is an important aspect to consider when trying to determine relationships. Possible risks associated with online consumption are briefly highlighted and the relevance of studying online influences on politics is explained. The research problem that guides this study is that alongside an increased access to the Internet, we see a shift in attitudes and political behaviour among South Africans. Although those shifts may be due to poor government performance, it is possible that the Internet and social media have had a role to play in those changes, given the global literature on the effects of the Internet on democracy.

Furthermore, we set out our research questions that seek to determine which groups in South Africa predominantly use the Internet and social media, and whether there is a measurable relationship between online political news consumption and political attitudes and behaviour. In order to measure such relationship, two methodological approaches are introduced, those being a quantitative research approach my means of statistical analysis using SPSS, and a qualitative approach using focus group discussions with students from Stellenbosch University. Chapter 1 concludes by setting out the significance of the study based on the drawn-up hypotheses relating to the two research questions guiding the study. Each hypothesis is addressed, and implications discussed should they find support or rejection.

6.2 Literature Review

Chapter 2 is divided into several sections that seek to explain the connection between the Internet and political outcomes. It starts off by highlighting various examples that demonstrate how the Internet and social media have gained an increasing importance in political campaigns and how incumbents are increasingly using social media as a tool to create links to the public. Furthermore, the chapter looks at the link between political values and attitudes and the Internet. Several studies such as the ones by Stoycheff and Nisbet (2014) and the concept of ‘window-opening’ facilitated through online content, Norris’ (2001) notion of the

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overdominance of postmaterialists online, and Shawney's (2017) "generation too much information", are discussed. This section also briefly addresses the media malaise theory and the virtuous circle theory and how they could potentially relate to the Internet, and highlights risks of selective exposure and echo chambers online.

Chapter 2 also addresses the four dominating theses relating to the link between the Internet and political behaviour. These are the mobilisation, reinforcement, normalisation, and displacement thesis. The mobilisation thesis states that more time an individual spends online, searching for political information, the more likely that individual is to engage in offline forms of participation such as voting or signing petitions. The reinforcement thesis suggests that existing inequalities will only be reinforced through Internet use and that the divide between the haves and have nots will be exacerbated by the Internet. Furthermore, the normalisation thesis argues that radical change through increased Internet access is unlikely to happen as the Internet will eventually reflect a "politics as usual" scenario, where participation will be skewed towards more educated and wealthier users (Norris, Curtice, 2006). Lastly, the displacement thesis states that "time spent online could actually displace time formerly devoted to social and political purposes" (Hoffman, et al., 2017:1). This view holds that the more an individual spends time on the Internet or operating technological devices, the less likely he or she is to devote remaining leisure time to pursue civic activities. Of all four theses, the mobilisation seems to find the biggest support, however this only holds if the Internet is used to source political information.

Furthermore, this chapter attempts to address the confusion relating to the dynamic between the Internet and individuals and suggests that because information does not flow unidirectional. Instead, the content consumers and content creators are likely to influence and be influenced by another, thereby forming a new dimension of socialisation.

Lastly, some literature relating to the Internet and politics in South Africa is addressed. We find that the research done so far mainly focuses on qualitative approaches that examine individual uses of social media to mobilise people behind a common cause, such as the university hashtag movements. Yet, no studies have been conducted that focus on how the Internet and social media may shape political attitudes and behaviour of South Africans, which further justifies this study.

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6.3 Methodology

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the methodological foundation of the research study. It starts off with the quantitative analysis, highlighting the benefits and drawbacks of secondary data analysis as well as survey research. Thereafter, the chapter lists the variables that are used to measuring relationships between Internet and social media use to source political news (independent) and political attitudes and behaviour (dependent). It further describes which statistical tests will be used to measure relationships, those being Spearman's rho at an ordinal by ordinal level and gamma at an ordinal by nominal level.

Next, the chapter moves on to describe the qualitative analysis of the study in the form of focus groups. This section also lists several advantages and disadvantages of qualitative research, the discussion procedure of the focus groups and the questions that participants were asked. Finally, a brief account is provided of the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods and how the two can complement each other by compensating for each other's shortcomings. Furthermore, the kind of method used to integrate both approaches is explained, which is a combination of additional and sequential coverage. The insights gained through the quantitative analysis serve as a foundation upon which focus group questions are formulated. In other words, statistical outcomes are used to formulate questions

6.4 Quantitative Analysis

The first part of the quantitative analysis set out to answer the first research question of this study which is "Which demographic groups predominantly use the Internet and social media to source political news?". The results of the analysis show that the strongest relationships can be found for age, education, race and location, thereby allowing us to deduce that Internet and social media users tend to be younger, more educated and live in urban areas. The crosstabulation provided on page 102 shows that the race groups which use Internet and social media to source political news most frequently are white and Indian respondents. Coloured and black respondents use the mediums far less frequently by comparison. To answer the question in full; The demographic groups that predominantly use the Internet and social media to source political news are young, educated, white and Indian respondents who live in urban areas.

The second part of the analysis sought to answer research question two which asks, "Is there a measurable difference between Internet and social media users versus non-users in terms of their political attitudes and their behaviour?". We saw that the relationships between the

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dependent and independent variables were quite weak and, in many instances, non-existent, thereby suggesting that either Internet penetration in South Africa is simply not strong enough to exert any effects on the population and this research is conducted to early. Alternatively, it could mean that those South Africans that read their news online are not affected by the content. Or it could indicate that we are not measuring the relationship correctly. While the first two possibilities seemed quite plausible, given the relatively low Internet penetration in South Africa (mainly due to high costs and poverty that prevails in many parts of the country), we take the analysis a step further to determine whether differences between groups can be found.

This step leads us to formulate the third research question, "Are there measurable differences between Internet and social media users versus non-users in terms of their political attitudes and behaviour based on age and race?". In order to answer this question, we split age (recoded) and race into their separate categories and run correlations. The results show that there are clear differences in terms of the impact of the Internet and social media and political attitudes, values, and behaviour for each group in question. Although the correlations were certainly not strong or significant for each dependent variable in question, there were cases that suggest that using the Internet and social media for political news does have an impact on the dependent variables.

The results indicate that significant correlations could be found especially for the 25-34, 35-44 and 55+ age cohorts, and mostly Indian and coloured respondents, which indicates that online news media can have the potential to influence political values, attitudes and behaviour, albeit only specific groups of the population. Although a summary of findings was presented at the end of Chapter 4, it is worth pointing them out once more.

When it comes to measures of emancipative values, we saw that online political news media seem to increase support for gender equality in terms of leadership among 18-24-year olds and the more they use online news media, the more 55+-year olds and Indian respondents tend to disagree that government should be able to ban any organization that goes against its policies. Furthermore, Indian respondents also believe that the media should have the right to publish any views without government control the more they read political news online. Overall, Indian respondents appear to be positively affected the most by Internet and social media use when it comes to emancipative values.

When it comes to interest in public affairs and the discussing politics, the Internet and social media seem to have the potential to positively impact those attitudes mostly for those aged 25-34, 35-44 and 55+ as well as for black, coloured and Indian respondents. Additionally, we find

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that increased use of the Internet and social media seems to erode trust in politicians and increase perceptions of corruption among 18-24-year olds. This also holds for black respondents. Internet and social media use also negatively affects levels of trust for those aged 55+ and it increases the likelihood of 25-34-year olds to believe that officials and institutions are involved in corruption

The more time white respondents spend browsing the Internet and social media for political news, the more likely they are to believe that South Africa is a full democracy; yet the more time Indian respondents spend on the Internet, the less likely they are to believe that South Africa is a full democracy

Internet and social media use increase the likelihood of 45-54- and 55+-year olds to reject one-party rule. Yet, it also increases the likelihood of those aged 35-44, 45-54 and 55+ to approve of Apartheid. On the other hand, the more time Indian and coloured respondents spend on the Internet and social media, the more likely they are to disapprove of military rule and Apartheid, respectively

When it comes to measures of political behaviour, we also find a number of significant correlations. For example, Internet and social media use increase the likelihood of those aged 25-34 and 35-44 to be a member of a religious group or voluntary association. This also holds for coloured and Indian respondents. They are also more likely to attend a community meeting and joining others to raise an issue

Internet and social media use increase the likelihood of those age 55 and above to work for a candidate or party and it also increases the likelihood of those aged 45-54 and black, white and Indian respondents to vote and coloured respondents are more likely to contact an official or institution the more time they spend online.

Furthermore, all race groups become more likely to either request government action, contacting the media or an official for help. This correlation is especially strong for Indian respondents relative to all other race groups. Internet and social media use also appears to positively affect 18-24-year olds in terms of contacting the media and officials; this also applies to those aged 55 and above in terms of contacting the media. Lastly, white respondents appear to be affected the most when it comes to Internet and social media use and their likelihood attending a demonstration or protest. Indian respondents also seem to be positively affected.

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To answer the third research question, we can say that there are measurable differences between Internet and social media users versus non-users in terms of their political attitudes and behaviour based on age and race. This applies mostly to respondents aged 25-34, 35-44 and 55+, however we also find some significant correlations for other age groups, albeit not as frequently. The strongest relationships we find for people from different race groups pertain to Indian, coloured, and white respondents. This comes as no surprise, given that Indian and white respondents tend to have the highest levels of education in South Africa and can be expected to spend more time online. Future research will have to determine why coloured respondents seem to be affected to such a degree by online news media, given their relatively low levels of use compared to Indian and white respondents.

6.5 Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative analysis follows a less strict structure compared to the quantitative analysis. Instead of providing the answers of each respondent according to the questions that were asked, they are instead structured according to themes of the discussion. The first theme of the discussion was *Social Media and the Internet as a Source of Political News*. Here, respondents indicated that social media and the Internet are preferred as a source of political news because they provide more *ad hoc* information that feels less controlled. Responses suggest that online news sources are preferred because they feel less controlled, compared to conventional news sources and because participants can access information at any given time.

The second theme was *Social Media, Trust and Politicians* and looked at reasons why younger people might be so distrustful and cynical of politics. It appears that online information provides a justification of sorts for young people, which confirms their suspicion. This may be due to the frequency of scandalous news revolving around incumbents and therefore, we find evidence in support of the media malaise theory that states that coverage of politics as "horse-race" can lead to lower levels of trust and cynicism (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Robinson, 1976; Heywood, 2013:185).

The third theme covered *Social Media, Democracy and Selective Exposure*. Although participants appeared to believe that online media has the potential to improve democracy by making relevant information more readily available, they were also weary of the spread of fake news. Furthermore, social media and 'the coverage of politics as a horse-race' lowers their likelihood or intention to vote during elections. This stands in combination with low levels of trust toward incumbents as respondents seem to feel like all politicians are not to be trusted and

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therefore do not deserve their vote. Additionally, we find that some respondents are prone to echo chambers online, where they tend to expose themselves only to views and opinions that reflect their own. Although some participants were aware of the fact that they should be exposed to different points of views, they maintained that once they dislike someone or something, they withdraw their online support.

The last theme that is covered in Chapter 5 looks at *Social Media and Online Hierarchies*. Contrary to the findings of Yildiz (2002:54) that online the content creator and the content consumer "merge" in the absence of hierarchies, our findings suggest that those hierarchies are not necessarily absent. Instead, respondents indicate that most of the content online is dominated by certain online influencers who dictate which trends to follow. Some respondents indicated a dislike toward these structures as failure to follow certain trends or disagreement with them may lead to social exclusion.

6.6 The findings in comparative perspective and recommendations

We find that despite the negative correlation between Internet and social media use and age, (where younger people are more likely to source their political news online than older respondents), young people are actually less likely to be influenced by Internet and social media. In turn, those aged 25-34, 35-44, 45-54 and 55 and above show stronger, more significant correlations. This might indicate that young people already hold certain attitudes that are not brought about by increased Internet and social media use. Instead, these attitudes and values might be reinforced through online content.

It might have been more beneficial to conduct additional focus groups with older generations to determine where the differences between the cohorts lie. This might have told us more about the attitudes and behaviour of the cohorts and how increased use of the Internet and social media to source political news influences those political attitudes and behaviour.

One thing that we can say for certain is the fact that being online erodes trust of young people as both research approaches have found evidence to support this claim. Simultaneously, younger people are also more likely to believe that most officials and institutions are involved in cases of corruption. As such, the Internet and social media might negatively affect democracy in the long run through a gradual erosion of trust in incumbents of younger cohorts. Officials running for office might do well to determine what deems them trustworthy in the eyes of potential young voters if they wish to uphold higher levels of turnout.

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Furthermore, more research should focus on certain online influencers and their followers. Previous statements by researchers such as Yildiz (2002) about the absence of hierarchies online will need to be reformulated. Although it might be true that there is no governing body online that establishes rules on how to behave online, there nevertheless appear to be certain personalities that set trends and standards for their followers. Who those influencers are and what their follower demographic looks like will have to be determined in order to gain a clear understanding of certain online groups and how their political attitudes and behaviour might differ.

In hindsight, using the Afrobarometer survey to determine relationships might not have been the best choice as it is limited in is questionnaire in terms of Internet and social media use and attitudes and behaviour that resonate with that usage. Additionally, more focus groups with different demographic cohorts might be another beneficial approach because this allows us to gain a more in-depth understanding of certain attitudes and differences in those attitudes that cannot be measured through surveys alone. Yet, herein lies the value in academic research because it allows us to deduce which research approaches do and do not work.

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Appendix A

Independent variables

12. How often do you get news from the following sources?						
	Everyday	A few times a week	A few times a month	Less than once a month	Never	Don't Know
A. Newspaper	4	3	2	1	0	9
B. Television	4	3	2	1	0	9
C. Newspapers	4	3	2	1	0	9
D. Internet	4	3	2	1	0	9
E. Social Media such as Facebook or Twitter	4	3	2	1	0	9

Dependent variables

13. How interested would you say you are in public affairs?	
Very interested	3
Somewhat interested	2
Not very interested	1
Not at all interested	0
Don't know	9

14. When you get together with your friends or family, would you say you discuss political matters	
Frequently	2
Occasionally	1
Never	0
Don't know	9

16. Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose statement 1 or statement 2.			
Statement 1: Government should be able to ban any organization that goes against its policies		**Statement 2: We should be able to join any organization, whether or not the government approves of it.**	
Agree Very Strongly With Statement 1 (1)	Agree with Statement 1 (2)	Agree Very Strongly With Statement 2 (3)	Agree with Statement 2 (4)
Agree with Neither			5
Don't know			9

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17. Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose statement 1 or statement 2.			
Statement 1: The media should have the right to publish any views and ideas without government control.		**Statement 2: The government should have the right to prevent the media from publishing things that it considers harmful to society**	
Agree Very Strongly With Statement 1 (1)	Agree with Statement 1 (2)	Agree Very Strongly With Statement 2 (3)	Agree with Statement 2 (4)
Agree with Neither			5
Don't know			9

18. Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose statement 1 or statement 2.			
Statement 1: Men make better political leaders than women, and should be elected rather than women.		**Statement 2: Women should have the same chance of being elected to political office as men.**	
Agree Very Strongly With Statement 1 (1)	Agree with Statement 1 (2)	Agree Very Strongly With Statement 2 (3)	Agree with Statement 2 (4)
Agree with Neither			5
Don't know			9

19. For each group, could you tell me whether you are an official leader, an active member, an inactive member or not a member					
	Official leader	Active Member	Inactive Member	Not a Member	Don't Know
F. A religious group that meets outside of regular worship services	3	2	1	0	9
G. Some other voluntary association or community group	3	2	1	0	9

20. Here's a list of actions that people sometimes take as citizens. For each of these, please tell me whether you, personally, have done any of these things in the past year. If not, would you do this if you had the chance?						
	Often	Several times	Once or twice	Would if had the chance	Would never do this	Don't Know
A. Attended a community meeting	4	3	2	1	0	9
B. Got together with others to raise an issue	4	3	2	1	0	9

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21. Understanding that some people were unable to vote in the most recent national election in May 2014, which of the following statements is true for you		**Recoded**
You were too young to vote	8	2 Did not vote
You were not registered to vote	0	
You voted in the elections	1	1 Voted
You decided not to vote	2	2 Did not vote
You could not find the polling station	3	
You were prevented from voting	4	
You did not have time to vote	5	
You did not vote because you could not find your name in the voters' register	6	
Did not vote for some other reason	7	
Don't know	9	

23. Thinking about the last national election in May 2014, did you:			
	No	Yes	Don't know
A. Attend a campaign rally	0	1	9
B. Attend a meeting with a candidate or campaign staff	0	1	9
C. Try to persuade others to vote for a certain presidential or legislative candidate or political party?	0	1	9
D. Work for a candidate or party?	0	1	9

24. During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons about some important problem or to give them your views?						
	Never	Only once	A few times	Often	Don't Know	**Recoded into scale variable (don't know excluded)**
A. A local government councillor	0	1	2	3	9	
B. A Member of Parliament	0	1	2	3	9	
C. An official of a government agency	0	1	2	3	9	
D. A political party official	0	1	2	3	9	

20. Here's a list of actions that people sometimes take as citizens when they are dissatisfied with government performance. For each of these, please tell me whether you, personally, have done any of these things in the past year. If not, would you do this if you had the chance?						
	Often	Several times	Once or twice	Would if had the chance	Would never do this	Don't Know

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A. Joined others in your community to request action from government	4	3	2	1	0	9
B. Contacted the media, like calling a radio program or writing a letter to a newspaper	4	3	2	1	0	9
C. Contacted a government official to ask for help or make a complaint	4	3	2	1	0	9
D. Refused to pay a tax or fee to government	4	3	2	1	0	9
E. Participated in a demonstration or protest march	4	3	2	1	0	9

28. There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives?

	Strongly Disapprove	Disapprove	Neither Approve or Disapprove	Approve	Strongly Approve	Don't Know
A. Only one political party is allowed to stand for election and hold office	1	2	3	4	5	9
B. The army comes in to govern the country	1	2	3	4	5	9
C. Elections and Parliament are abolished so that the President can decide everything	1	2	3	4	5	9
D. If the country returned to the old system we had under Apartheid	1	2	3	4	5	9

30. Which of these three statements is closest to your own opinion?	
STATEMENT 1: Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government	3

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STATEMENT 2: In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable	2
STATEMENT 3: For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have	1
Don't know	9

41. Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in South Africa? Are you:	
Very satisfied	4
Fairly satisfied	3
Not very satisfied	2
Not at all satisfied	1
South Africa is not a democracy	0
Don't know	9

52. How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?

	Not at all	Just a little	Somewhat	A lot	Don't Know / Haven't heard enough	**Computed into scale variable (don't know excluded)**
A. The President	0	1	2	3	9	
B. Parliament	0	1	2	3	9	
E. Your Local Government Council	0	1	2	3	9	
F. The ruling party	0	1	2	3	9	

53. How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?

	None	Some of them	Most of them	All of them	Don't Know / Haven't heard enough	**Computed into scale variable (don't know excluded)**
A. The President	0	1	2	3	9	
B. Members of Parliament	0	1	2	3	9	
C. Government officials	0	1	2	3	9	
D. Local government councillors	0	1	2	3	9	
E. Police	0	1	2	3	9	
F. Tax Officials	0	1	2	3	9	

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Demographic variables

1. How old are you? [scale recoded into categories]	
18-24	1
25-34	2
35-44	3
45-54	4
55+	5

97. What is your highest level of education?	
No formal schooling	0
Informal schooling only	1
Some primary schooling	2
Primary school completed	3
Intermediate school or some secondary school / high school	4
Secondary school / high school completed	5
Post-secondary qualifications, other than university	6
Some university	7
University completed	8
Post-graduate	9
Don't know	99

102. Respondent's gender	
Male	1
Female	2

102. Respondent's race	
Black / African	1
White / European	2
Coloured / Mixed race	3
South Asian / Indian	4
Other	95

URBRUR Location of respondent	
Urban	1
Rural	2

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Appendix B

Syntax

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